

Luke's Gospel

Chapters 6:20 – 9:50

ROMANUS
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SOMUN

Volume 2

About the cover.

I am very grateful to my dear friend Christine “Chris” Eaves, who has given her time and skill to producing the covers for the 6 Volumes of Luke’s Gospel. The covers show the gradual revelation of Jesus, as you progress from a closed door, to an open door, revealing the Saviour. The covers are a sermon in their own right.

About the artist.

Chris has always been interested in photography. For many years, she sold artwork in local galleries and used photography just as a reference. Gradually though, and with the introduction of digital cameras, the photography became more important than painting.

Chris lives in Weymouth on the South Coast of the UK and works right opposite Weymouth Beach, which presents many opportunities for photography and the light is constantly changing. A few years ago she won a national photography magazine competition and the prize was a Canon 450D.

In Autumn, 2011, Chris was one of the 12 finalists (out of 55,000 entries) in the BBC TV's Countryfile Calendar Competition. “This has given me great spur to push on in this fantastic world of photography. This is a wonderful world and there is so much that I'd love to do, and yet, it seems that time here is so short. I try not to waste a moment!”

A devout Christian, Chris uses her talent to provide devotionals from nature, calendars, linking Scriptures with pictures, to inspire other Christians to look with a discerning eye on the Creator of the Universe, Jesus Christ.

Please visit Chris’s website when you have a moment.

<https://www.chriseavesphotography.co.uk/>

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Dedication

This 6 Volume series comprise the ministries given between **October 2021** and **March 2024**.

To those who sat through these ministries, I thank you for your encouragement to me and I hope you too have been encouraged.

Thanks to my amanuensis Shelley for her continual encouragement to get this book published and her gracious correction, suggestions and support to me.

My gratitude goes also to my wife Diana who has encouraged my recovery and been a source of strength, inspiration and love. She has always been there for me, physically and spiritually, on my path back from a stroke.

Love in Jesus,

Mike 24th August 2024

P.S. Do contact me with any queries michael.winnett@ntlworld.com

Where a Bible version is not stated it is the Authorised Version, otherwise:

- CEV Contemporary English Version
- Darby John Nelson Darby Translation
- ERV Easy to Read Version
- Geneva 1587 Version
- GNB Good News Translation
- GW God's Word
- ISV International Standard Version
- KJV Kings James Version
- LEB Lexham English Version
- LITV Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX Septuagint
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- YLT Young's Literal Translation

Scripture quotations are in ***italic script***. All versions can be found in e-Sword. e-Sword is a fast, effective and free way to study the Bible. e-Sword is feature rich and user friendly with more capabilities than you would expect in a free Bible study app. Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword <http://www.e-sword.net/> Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

40. What is good about being poor *Luke 6: 20*

Luk 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the Kingdom of God..... Mat 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Mat 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We are ready to hear what the teaching of Jesus is all about. Imagine you are there with the crowd, freshly healed, full of anticipation, the warm breeze blowing gently around you, the sunshine warming you, your worries for a time removed by the miracles of Jesus. What would you be thinking in your mind and what would you be expecting to hear?

For those of us who have been reading this story for half a century, it is a series of events which we have become familiar with, the old, old story. It becomes a picture in our minds of events long ago, with people long dead. It becomes coloured by our religious prejudice, doctrines, by the denomination we have come to trust, by science so called, by the advance of technology, by many, many wars, by great upheavals. If you will follow me, we will go back to a time when Christianity did not exist, when what the world which we inhabit, would amaze people.

In the time we go back to, the Old Testament is still in full vigour, the Messiah has come but His role is not absolutely clear. It is not certain whether He will become an earthly King and restore the Kingdom of Israel, mounting a great war against the Empire of Rome. It is not clear whether He will die and what He will die for. It is not clear that He will somehow replace the sacrificial system. It is not clear whether He will establish earthly worship in the Temple or even rebuild the Temple. We sit with the multitude on the mount in the plain, in expectation of hearing His purpose.

So far in Luke's history, we have had an account of the birth of John and Jesus, though not many have been privy to it. We have seen, after a period of thirty years, Jesus come from silence to be baptised and announce the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God. We have heard Him speak in the synagogues of release, freedom, and healing, and here it is, the Year of Release, the acceptable Year of the Lord but we do not know much more than that. He has demonstrated His healing power but we have no knowledge of His teaching, His doctrine, what He is about.

With bated breath we listen, He comes forward and we straining our Jewish ears to catch every word of His, and we hear first, **"Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"**. They have no cameras, no voice recorders, nothing to replay what is said, no pause button, nothing to hear again the words

of Jesus, no time to take it in, time to digest its content, before the next utterance is given.

This is astounding, to give such an enigmatic message to a simple people, to give such a thought provoking word and leave little time to consider it before the next word is spoken. That is, to say the least, unhelpful. If you had to say what you thought of this opening verse of the Sermon on the Mount, if I were to go around and ask what you thought it meant, I am sure I would get many different answers.

Matthew records Jesus opening words as, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*. Luke does not mention the “poor in spirit” as Matthew does, and I wonder if he had understood it when he gave his account. What is there to be blessed in, by being poor? The people are poor and it is not an ideal state to be in and king David thought so too, *Pro 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: **give me neither poverty nor riches**; feed me with food convenient for me*: Too much riches are as bad as not enough.

The poor are always with us, as Jesus said, *Mat 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always*. The poor may just be very badly off, not ask for anything and live on the edge of survival and relative to others they are poor. The people that Jesus refers to are not just poor, they are the absolute poor, and they are beggars. The word for “poor” that Jesus uses is better translated “beggar”. Beggar is πτωχός = ptōchos, and it is someone who is at the extremity of poverty, forced to ask for help to survive. How can poor people, people consuming resources and not contributing to them, ever be a blessing or ever have a blessing?

“When he was 12 years old in 1824, Charles Dickens worked 10-hour days in a rat-infested shoe-polish factory for six shillings a week. That’s the equivalent of £30.68 in 2017 currency. It was all the money he had to get by. His father, mother, and five siblings aged 2 to 11 were in prison because the family was in debt. This is what Western society did with the poor in the mid-1800s. If you fell behind on your bills or couldn’t pay legal fines, you and your family went to flea-ridden government workhouses where you would labour to earn your keep.

Your work did not automatically pay off your debts and you could spend the rest of your life there. If you died in a debtor’s prison, your body was given to anatomists to dissect in the name of science. Needless to say, Charles Dickens grew to hate the system and rail against it in his works. In his seminal novel “A Christmas Carol,” Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by two portly men raising money for the poor.”

Dickens wrote,

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the [one of the gentlemen], taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I could say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?" said Scrooge.

"Both very busy, sir."

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course," said Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear it."

This attitude to the poor is still among us today and we view the poor as a nuisance and grudgingly make provision for them. Did Jesus have this form of poverty in mind? Today we have many forms of poverty, fuel poverty, food poverty, but this is something different, it is "spiritual poverty" and we have Matthew to thank for that adjective "spiritual", which gives us the direction of the poverty or beggary. You may have wealth, riches but be in spiritual poverty, you may be fit and healthy but in dire spiritual poverty, you may not see your need of Christ but you are most surely in the deepest poverty imaginable.

What is it to be in spiritual poverty? Simply not having enough of the Spirit of God, and recognising it. I am not talking about humanistic "spirituality" or pseudo-spirituality, which to some people means talking to crystals and stones or getting messages from them. To others it means having a sense of what is going on in the flower bed because you are sensitive enough to hear the flowers talk, or that it is a heightened sense that you are listening to the Universe, while others cannot hear a thing. Spirituality can mean a whole range of states of being, from the pompous to the bonkers but I am not talking of this kind of spirituality.

I am talking about being deprived of the Holy Spirit, a Person, in this life and knowing that you cannot get enough of Him to satisfy your soul. Paul states his own spiritual poverty in Philippians, *Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but **loss** for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but **dung**, that I may win Christ, Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which*

is of God by faith: Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Php 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

My life, he says, Its all rubbish, dung, things better eaten by dogs, that is how he views life without Christ. It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, that reminds him of Jesus and a much better life, *Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

You ask a Christian if they are poor in Spirit and they will probably say yes, but you say to them, “What are you doing about it?” Ah, that is where you find out what they are made of. They are prepared to be “poor” but they are passive in it, they do absolutely nothing, it something they live with, its a chronic condition. But contrast them with Paul, he is constantly striving after Christ, to know Him, not about Him only, but personally, and that is his goal. He is a true Christian, a true disciple, and he lives what he believes, Christianity in action.

We will eventually see all that we did in life was rubbish without Christ. All the time fillers, pass times, hobbies, activities, all the things which take us from God are useless. And they might be taking us permanently away from God. We will rue the day we spent indulging ourselves, instead of finding Jesus.

What is Jesus saying in this first blessing, “blessed are the poor in Spirit”. Jesus is giving us a new look at the Ten Commandments. He could have said it differently, more plainly, openly, but if He did, would you take it to heart? They did not accept the law, they did not keep it, so He says, “Blessed *are* the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. It is another way of presenting the first of the ten commandments. *Mat 22:37 Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** Mat 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.*

He is not giving us a new interpretation of the Commandments, He is just saying the same things. He is saying the same things but approaching them differently. The Jew would have approached the command by a strict observance of the law, by not blaspheming the Name of God, by not breaking the law, by not bowing down to graven images or false Gods. An unbeliever could do all of that outward observance and be a Pharisee to boot, and nothing of his nature, the inner man, would be changed.

Man could have the vilest thoughts, the most depraved feelings towards his fellow man, but outwardly, he could conform to the law. It is a bit like Mary Whitehouse’s campaigns to clean up what was on TV, and the fight against blasphemy and pornography. It was a fight against that which went on in the

outside world but could not legislate for the dark recesses of the heart. It would lead to a society not unlike the Jews where morality expressed itself outwardly but not inwardly.

Jesus addresses the commandment in all its glory. It does not mean that outward obedience is enough, that is not what it meant and God is not satisfied with that. It is the outward **AND** the inner obedience. That is what He is getting at with what He says. The man who obeys outwardly is a hypocrite without the inner obedience. How do I show my inner obedience? By being “**poor in Spirit**”, by being the person who is eaten up by God. By becoming a person who sees all that he does in this life as a worthless dunghill, and all that he wants is the Spirit of Christ, and he cries, give me Jesus. He cries, *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* And he gets an answer, *Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

This is the blessing. This is the reality of the life He offers you, to come after Him, and be His disciples. To be a part of His Kingdom and to be astounded at the events that He will bring about in your future. It was said of a puritan that if you had pricked him he would bleed scripture, but I say if you pricked a Christian he would bleed Jesus.

You want saving? How much do you want it? With all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind? I think that many people will take this offer so far, but no further. They are not prepared to give it all up for Jesus. They are prepared to be poor, forgo things for Christ, fast for Him, go to the ends of the earth for Him, but not give themselves wholly for Him.

Frances Ridley Havergal recounts a visit to a place where she wrote a hymn, “Ever only all for Thee”.

I went for a little visit of five days (to Areley House). There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for, some converted, but not rejoicing Christians. He gave me the prayer, “Lord, give me all in this house!” And He just did. Before I left the house everyone had got a blessing. The last night of my visit after I had retired, the governess asked me to go to the two daughters. They were crying, &c.; then and there both of them trusted and rejoiced; it was nearly midnight. I was too happy to sleep, and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration; and these little couplets formed themselves, and chimed in my heart one after another till they finished with “Ever, Only, ALL for Thee!”

Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

41. Hunger *Luke 6: 21*

Luk 6:21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.....Mat 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. .

If you are following this closely, you will have already seen that the account in Matthew's Gospel contains more information than does Luke's Gospel. They start with the same blessing upon the poor, the poor in Spirit and then they get out of synchronisation. Compare the accounts for yourself. Try and get them in order having only heard them once and you will not criticise the dear men who wrote them!

There may be different perspectives that the two authors are writing from, and two different audiences they are writing to. There are also lots more blessings that could be described and are not, but you get the picture by what Jesus is saying. As we saw last time, the opening verse says it all, and all the Beatitudes are summed up in the Law as "love to God and love to your neighbour", and in these short verses there is summed up the nature and character of the person with those characteristics, the characteristics of the **heavenly man**. You could spend more or less time describing the heavenly man, but you should have a picture of what is required of you from both accounts.

Luke's account states the "blessings" that accompanies the state of being poor, weeping, hungry, and rejected but also adds the "woes" that accompany the opposite state, that of being, rich, laughing, well fed and well spoken of. I think that we will see in these two states of being that we are dealing with, the inward spiritual state of man and the outward physical state of man as being complementary. How a man lives on the outside and how he lives inwardly, in his soul, how a man conducts his earthly life and his attitude to heaven. Each will show him what sort of man he is, for these will complement one another. If he seeks the things below, the earthly things, he will not look for anything heavenly, if his heart is set on things above, that will also show in his attitude to this life.

The poor in spirit is how the man feels inwardly, how he yearns for Christ. The rich are not concerned for their spiritual state and are quite content with their lives in the world and with what they have, but it is all that they will have. Those weeping and mourning over the many sorrows of life, "crying their heart out" as we say, suffering the dark night of the soul, they shall be blessed and comforted, but the fool who laughs while he goes through this life, will weep for his insensitivity about what he did not value or consider valuable.

Those in the state of hungering for righteousness, the inward state of seeking God's will, are set in opposition to those merely settle for the external pleasure of life, which seem to satisfy their need, but only for so long, and then they will be ravenously hungry but able to do nothing about it. Those rejected for Christ, the hated, the excluded, insulted, the people whose good name is trodden under foot because of the Son of Man, will rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because they have a great reward in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But if they speak well of you, "O woe to you", for they did that to the false prophets.

The torment of hell will, I think, have some of these elements in it. In life, you rejected Christ, you were rich, laughing, well fed and well spoken of, and you did not care for anyone but yourself. You hated God and you hated your neighbour. Now in death, you have time to review your life, you see that those souls who followed Christ were right all along, you found that those who said that you only get this life and then it all ends in nothing, eat drink for tomorrow we die, just did not know what they were speaking about. Then there you are, dead but conscious, and you are not surrounded by the trinkets and stuff of your life, it is all gone, your family are not with you, your friends are not with you and as you came into the world with nothing, you left the world with nothing, and here you are with only memories.

You will torment yourselves with the remorse of one who has discovered the truth. You cannot blame Christ for your torment, for you came into this state by your own being, and the agony you suffer is of your own making, but worst of all you can do absolutely nothing about it. You are not unlike that other man who lived sumptuously every day, dressed in purple caring little for God and in death you find yourself in hell. You had Moses and the Prophets to warn you about hell and you deliberately neglected them, as did the rich man. What good would it do to tell you of Jesus after all you had Moses?

Luk 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. Luk 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Luk 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Luk 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: Luk 16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not

Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

The rich man is suffering remorse, he wants his brothers to avoid the place in which he is suffering torments, he has feelings for them, hell has not stripped him of all his humanity, of all his kind feelings, they have not gone his memory, but it is useless. He sees across to the blessed state of Lazarus, but it is not certain that the blessed Lazarus sees him. He may in his sorrow look into the lives of men, as through a glass panel but be able to do nothing.

In “A Christmas Carol”, Dickens describes the fate of the wealthy,

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley’s Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

I think that describes lost humanity, unable to interfere for good in human matters, and the time has passed. Dickens could have been writing about the rich man and Lazarus but remorse did no good, for they have “Moses and the Prophets”, and they did nothing. They had loud warnings, and the siren went off every day, but they did not listen to its warning.

The physically poor, the physically hungry, the tearful and rejected must have had listened intently to what Jesus spoke about, but poor is a relative term and the poor of Jesus’ day are not the poor of today, certainly not in America. The following are facts about persons defined as “poor” in America, by the [2010] Census Bureau as taken from various government reports. Do you think that the are poor?

- 80 percent of poor households have air conditioning. In 1970, only 36 percent of the entire U.S. population enjoyed air conditioning.
- 92 percent of poor households have a microwave.
- Nearly three-fourths have a car or truck, and 31 percent have two or more cars or trucks.
- Nearly two-thirds have cable or satellite TV.
- Two-thirds have at least one DVD player, and 70 percent have a VCR.
- Half have a personal computer, and one in seven have two or more computers.

- More than half of poor families with children have a video game system, such as an Xbox or PlayStation.
- 43 percent have Internet access.
- One-third have a wide-screen plasma or LCD TV.
- One-fourth have a digital video recorder system, such as a TiVo.

They are not at all poor today in the west, just relatively poor. Now contrast that with being poor in Jesus day. Subsistence farmers, living on the breadline who formed about 90% of the population of Galilee with the other 10%, who are the elite, the extractors, the people living off of the poor. Jesus words must have resonated with them. Perhaps that is why Jesus is never recorded as visiting Sepphoris or Tiberius, big Roman cities in the Galilee region, and very prosperous too. The poor were a natural target for the Gospel, being already disillusioned with their lot in life.

But hard though life was, it would get harder if they did not repent and seek the Kingdom of God. It was a group of mainly poor people that were ready to listen to Him but they might just desert Him if they did not get immediate satisfaction. I think that this was the start of a misunderstanding about why Jesus had entered humanity. They saw it, on the face of it, as a mission to set this world right, to address the iniquities that divided men, to create a level playing field where all men were equal in substance as each other. Did not Isaiah say that very thing, *Luk 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Luk 3:5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; Luk 3:6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.* No sin to be dealt with, just social conditions.

The poor, weeping, hungry, and rejected people thought that they were on to a winner with Jesus. If you think that you have heard this message of Jesus before, you are most probably right,

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

The poem, "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus who was a Sephardic Jewess, was written in tribute to refugees and immigrants. It is displayed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

But unlike the welfare given by America, requiring only that you turn up to the party, Jesus' required more than that, He required an inward change. We learn

that in time, many of the disciples walked back on Him because they didn't have that faith in Him, *Joh 6:63 The Spirit is the one who gives life! Human strength can do nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are from that life-giving Spirit. Joh 6:64 But some of you refuse to have faith in me.*" Jesus said this, because from the beginning he knew who would have faith in him. He also knew which one would betray him. *Joh 6:65 Then Jesus said, "You cannot come to me, unless the Father makes you want to come. That is why I have told these things to all of you."* *Joh 6:66 Because of what Jesus said, **many of his disciples turned their backs on him and stopped following him.** CEV.*

They were not going to be given the kingdom without any effort on their part, *Luk 13:22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Luk 13:23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Luk 13:24 **Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.** Luk 13:25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Luk 13:26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. Luk 13:27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

When Jesus uttered the words, *Luk 6:21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.....Luk 6:25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger,* why didn't He speak clearly by saying that it was not physical hunger He spoke of? Why did He speak using this cryptic, this parabolic language, open to misinterpretation and confusion? If He had spoken clearly, then things like the "prosperity Gospel", the "healing ministry", "popes", "Mariolatry", etc., all could have been sorted out and the churches put on a sound base. Instead we have the rise of charlatans and shysters, leading people astray and making money on the back of them.

It was not made clear for the reason, that people would determine what sort of persons they were, by the teaching they followed. The aim was not to get a perfect church, everything sorted out in this life as if we were going to stay here on earth. *Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Mat 7:16 **Ye shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* The people would be known by the way they lived their lives.

If you make everything plain to people, they will not dig things up for themselves, dig their own wells. It is like sitting a test where the questions are answered and you have little to do but turn up for the examination. Jesus is the guide and light of the world, but it is a leading of the Spirit, and you have choices

to make, *Rom 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

The choice is quite clear to you, “do you hunger and thirst after righteousness” or do you not? Do you think that only a slight hunger will do, a moderate thirst will do, just hungry enough to be interested, just thirsty enough to go to a ministry every week and leave it at that. Do you think that you know enough to rest and do nothing, think that you are filled? **Filled with what?** The knowledge of Christ? That is easy to find out, you tell me what you have eaten and drunk today. You tell me what you have been filled with? Is it anything of God?

I think that we are in for a big surprise, *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

42. Law versus Beatitudes

Both the Law of Moses and the Beatitudes of Christ were delivered from a mountain. Do they complement one another or do they oppose one another. I have seen them on the walls of Anglican churches, in the nave, sometimes opposing each other on opposite walls, sometimes they are put side by side. The words of Moses and the words of Christ seem so different but are they? There is certainly a lot of “thou shalt not’s” in the Ten commands and only blessings in the Beatitudes.

According to one commentator, “Comparing the Ten Commandments and The Beatitudes reveals an important distinction. The Commandments come with the threat of punishment for any human being that does not submit to their edict. The Beatitudes come with the potential for reward for any human being willing to give enough focus, to come to some understanding of what they have to say.”

Is that so? The ten Commands are not all the laws that are given. There are about 613 laws in the OT. They are however the foundational laws, the apodictic laws. Apodictic law refers to timeless divine commands and not to “law applied”, it is “necessarily or demonstrably true; incontrovertible; clearly established or beyond dispute” since it is divinely revealed.

When the law of God is applied in different cases, we refer to it as casuistic law (if a man



does such and such, then this is what the penalty will be). Casuistic law in Israel is often the development of laws for particular personal and societal needs in light of God's holy and eternal apodictic law

So the case law, the details, proceeds from the fundamental ten commands. The 613 laws were not given all at once. Some are given in Exodus, and by the time you get to Leviticus some more are given because the law is being broken, and so on through Numbers where more are added, through Deuteronomy where even more are added. There is this growing body of laws, and you can see why the Talmud and Mishnah developed, to give even more laws to the Jews. Do watch this video, the Bible Project, The Law, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BGO9Mmd_cU

The Jews were like naughty schoolboys, requiring more and more correction, **Hos 11:1** *When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. Hos 11:2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Hos 11:3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. Hos 11:4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. Hos 11:5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. Hos 11:6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.*

It was singling out a nation for God, Israel, and making it ready for great things, just as David, a shepherd was made the King of Israel, *2Sa 7:8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:* It starts with proving the person and adding to their accomplishments, for not everything is given to the person at once, lest they are overwhelmed.

It was the same in the Garden, our first parents were not given all of the “how to’s” of a life with God, only little by little, *Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* If they had kept the rules all would have been well, but they didn’t and the rest is our history.

As a child, my parent had rules, rules trivial and rules not so trivial, and because I was obdurate, I was punished, *Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* One rule was about not putting clothes to warm on the paraffin heater. In the winter mornings, with frost on the inside of the room and cold lino on the floor, the paraffin heater was a bit of warm relief when getting up and dressed. The heater had a plate on the top with a series of holes around it presumably to let some of the heat out. We were not to place our clothes on the plate for obvious reasons. The temptation was too

great however, and the idea of putting a cold vest on your body was not as good as the alternative, a heated vest. The result was holes burnt in vests from leaving them too long on the heater and nearly catching the house on fire. It was a sensible rule, a rule for safety, a rule to save money, a rule for my own welfare, but I appreciated none of this.

One tea time, I was told to be patient and wait for everyone to sit down, then we would have tea. I was told to carry the teapot into the dining room and wait a few minutes then we could all start. I couldn't wait, and on the way in to the room, I put the spout in my mouth for a drink, and I think that my scream sounded so loud it must have seemed as if I was being murdered. I dropped the pot and fell in agony to the floor. I could not eat for two days. Being disobedient and impatient had cost me dearly, and the punishment was self-inflicted.

The rules of my parents were meant for my good, generally, and although sometimes a bit arbitrary, they gave a semblance of order to life. They made for peace, for stability, for unity and love in the family. God is not arbitrary and His laws are given to correct us and make us good sons, sons that a Father would be proud of.

The law was like that, a series of "thou shalt not's" for disobedient children to try and steer them through life. It was fighting against that human nature, which since the fall, always resists what God says. You see, the law gave the knowledge of sin, *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

The law was something else, it was a schoolmaster. *Gal 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Gal 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

That means a number of things. For every generation of man, he comes through the law to Christ. By being told what was wrong, by the knowledge of sin, he is led to Christ. By the discipline of the schoolmaster, by the rod of reproof, he is brought to see his sorry state before God, *Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom 7:24 **O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?** Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of*

*God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.***

When Jesus came into His ministry, the law was doing its work, in full flow but it was not achieving much. Jesus could have reiterated it, in fact He did in part, but He gave a new take on the law. He gave a heavenly perspective of the law, He gave the law for **the heavenly man**, after all His kingdom was a heavenly kingdom, *Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* He tells them of the blessings that they get from becoming heavenly minded, something unknown to the earthly man, the natural man, who lived by rules.

The Jews were so occupied in doing the law, that they hardly had time to think of heaven. Like John Bunyan's "man with the muckrake", they were too busy scratching about in the dirt, to consider the crown that was held above them. The law became an end in itself.

I suppose that the real key to opening up the relationship with God was love, *Exo 20:6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that **love me**, and keep my commandments.* It took us through three commands to get to the word "love" and then the word is not really emphasised.

I could spend my time "having no other Gods" by destroying other Gods, by making sure there were none in my house and that my children didn't have them, and making sure all the idols that I thought could ensnare me were out of my life. But that does not mean I love God, in fact I would have been so busy thinking about the law that I would have had no time to love God.

The Beatitudes open up a new perspective on the law. They open up the world of God, and what the people who really love Him are like. They show love from the heart of man to God. I believe that it was possible to do the commandments without truly loving God. The ruler is a case in point, *Mar 10:19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. Mar 10:20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Mar 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow*

The Beatitudes - KJV

Matthew 5:3-12

Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger &
thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted
for righteousness' sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

me. Mar 10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. He kept the law, but he could not give himself totally to God.

Jesus said, *Joh 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments*, but the love towards God was lacking, and it only went as far as outward obedience, not the heart obedience, the inward obedience tempered by love. So Jesus opens up the matter of heart obedience by giving the Beatitudes. He shows how a person feels when they truly love God. Not the act doing of the law, tithing anise, mint and cummin, but how one feels towards God in the doing of the law.

Do you feel a beggar in Spirit, even when you do the commands of God? Do you feel that you are doing enough for Him, do you feel that you really know Him, do you desperately ache after Him like Paul, *Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*; Paul does not want the self-righteousness which comes from law but the righteousness of Christ.

Do you not feel even more of a beggar, utterly dependent on Him, when you know The Mighty God is not an equal? The law somehow gave the Jews a feeling that they were equals before God. He made a covenant with them, with joint obligations and this might have given rise to the impression that they were of equal standing. I think the same is true of the Christian, they think that they are an equal with God and that they take Christ or reject Him, as equals with God. The Christian makes a nod to Christ and some having done so, put Christ in the cupboard and pays lip service to Him. They only knock on the doors of heaven on Sunday morning. They feel God is an equal and they can do what they like before Him, and some of the religious services are indistinguishable from a night club. There is little talked about of personal sin, and even less about the soul searching, and not enough of the poverty of Spirit and hungering after Him.

The Beatitudes hit hard against the hypocrisy of the man who observes the law yet has no desire to look for God. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. They are led to focus on something that has not been clearly seen before. God Himself, as a Father, as a friend, as a person to walk with and talk with, to love, not just coldly obey. I suppose that I would sum up Judaism as "impassionate" as far as serving God as a person. I know that some got beyond that, like David, but for many God equalled the Law, the stone tables and they served Him with a stone heart.

Now God is seen in the person of Jesus, someone we can easily relate to, and we should not forget that it is God speaking the Beatitudes. It is not the God of The Ten Commands, speaking against the God of the Kingdom of Heaven, for they are one and the same person. It shines a light upon the heart and gives us

warmth as to what He is doing, it is personal, it is My Lord and My God. And I am going to Heaven.

There is another very important outcome of this teaching which we overlook. It is a test of life, to see whether you have understood it, to see whether you really have taken it into your heart. Ask yourself the question, do you really love your God and see if what you say is true in the light of these verses. I used to think that the words of Jesus were very hard when He said, *Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.* But I do not see it as hard any longer. This verse tests you and me on our love for God. It is not testing our love for our sin riddled family. We know that we have love for them, even though it might be misplaced. But do you love God above all relationships on earth?

It is not talking about losing your Christian relations, they are no worry and they will be in Glory with you. It is asking us, why we do not love God enough to leave the faithless, leave all the unbelieving in our families for Him? If you cannot, because you cannot bear to lose them, you have lost your relationship with God. In eternity, you will not be able to do anything for your family and then who do you turn to? You came to Christ for forgiveness and now it seems you love your family more than Him? You have got your “forgiveness” and now you put the Saviour in second place to those who do not serve Him. Well, you cannot do that.

It is more than just lip service that will get you through the gates of heaven, it is a total commitment to the Lord, *Luk 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

It is whether you see your sin and have been forgiven much, or if it is as nothing and you love little. It is all or nothing.

43. Hate no man *Luke 6: 27 - 28*

Luk 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Luk 6:28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

There were three types of people to the Israelites. The **outcast**, the **stranger**, and the **neighbour**.

The **outcasts** were the people who would mislead the nation and bring them down, they were the faithless and unbelieving multitude of surrounding nations. *Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou*

goest to possess it, and hath **cast out many nations before thee**, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and **utterly destroy them**; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. Deu 7:4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. They were enemies not neighbours, but enemies by God's decree for what they would do to Israel.

Then there were the **strangers**. The strangers were not born in the land of Israel, like us Gentiles and neither were they the people destined for extermination, but they were not the Israelite neighbours, unless they had entered the covenant by agreeing the terms, Lev 24:16 *And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: **as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land**, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.* They put themselves under the law by entering Israel.

Finally there were the **Israelites**, and these are the people that were given the Law, a chosen nation, an holy people. These were the people designated "neighbours", people that you had to be neighbourly to. In Israel, the neighbour was a fellow Israelite. We think of a neighbour like the person next door, unrelated to us but it was not so then. Lev 19:18 *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of **thy people**, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD..... **Lev 19:18** 'Thou dost not take vengeance, nor watch **the sons of thy people**; and thou hast had love to thy neighbour as thyself; I am Jehovah.* LITV. The neighbour was a son of Israel.

We know we should love our neighbour, and Jesus gives us a story about a Samaritan, the good Samaritan, a despised person in Israel, a mongrel from the time of the captivity, and from an apostate nation of Israel. The lawyer poses the question, "Who is my neighbour?" Is it strictly limited to Israel, the sons of Israel, as had been thought or does it encompass a wider field of people.

Luk 10:25 *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Luk 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? Luk 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Luk 10:28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. Luk 10:29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, **And who is my neighbour?***

Jesus illustrates the story of three travellers, and their reactions upon finding another traveller on the Jericho road who had been set upon by robbers. The priest and the Levite ignore the poor man and continue on their way, but a Samaritan helps him and binds his wounds. The Samaritan also goes the extra mile and pays for his lodgings and expenses, until he had recovered from his injuries. When Jesus asks which of these three – **the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan** – acted as a neighbour to the robbed man, the lawyer answers “**The one who showed him mercy.**” To which Jesus replies, *Luk 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? Luk 10:37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

The neighbour was of course the Samaritan. The Levite and the priest, although Israelites, were not neighbours to the “certain man” who was robbed, the certain man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, either a Jew about his business, or a Gentile from the city of Jericho. It does not say of what nation he came from, it does not matter, and it does not concentrate on ethnicity, but it concentrates on the heart of the protagonist. The man with a heart to be a neighbour was a Samaritan.

The neighbour was merciful and blessed by that mercy, *Luk 10:37 And he said, He that shewed **mercy** on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.* It did not matter what nation you came from, the neighbour to anybody, is the man who is merciful to him. Jesus does not really answer the question “who is my neighbour”, but instead answers **what are the qualities of a neighbour**.

You can love your neighbour when things go well between you, but when there is occasion, when you are tested, that is where Jesus tells us not to retaliate, *Luk 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.* The lex talionis, the law of retaliation, held that criminals should receive as punishment, precisely equal to those injuries and damages they had inflicted upon their victims. It is better known as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”.

The Law of Moses did not say that you had to extract this type of punishment, that you had to poke some body’s eye out if they had damaged your eye. You could decline to take revenge and you could forgive the offender. The law merely stated the maximum punishment that you could extract for an injury, so that you could not take both eyes for the loss of one eye. It was a statute of limitation.

Jesus is opening up on the human attitude that takes vengeance as a necessary action, in the case where a man is offended. It is a sinful world, and there is a Day of Judgement coming, when all the actions of men will be judged and

appropriate punishments meted out, *Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* You are requested to give way to God's judgement, ***I will repay, saith the Lord.***

There is in man, that desire born of sin, to get back at someone who has caused you problems, and even thinking that God will repay, with a heart of revenge, thinking that, "O good, God will repay the person if I do not", and that is equally wrong. It is not right to even think of vengeance, when we have done so much evil ourselves, *Mat 7:2 God will be as hard on you as you are on others! He will treat you exactly as you treat them. Mat 7:3 You can see the speck in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the log in your own eye.* CEV.

Our attitude to our enemies is to be one of kindness. *Rom 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Rom 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* Jesus says just that in the Sermon on the Plain, *Luk 6:27 This is what I say to all who will listen to me: Love your enemies, and be good to everyone who hates you. Luk 6:28 Ask God to bless anyone who curses you, and pray for everyone who is cruel to you.*

I know it can be very hard. It does not say pray for some people who are cruel to you, or bless some people who curse you, or be good to some people who hate you, it says that you do it for "everyone and anyone". It is going further and deeper into the heart of man, it is cutting out the slightest bit of the cancer of sin and it is saying that there must be no room in your heart for hatred, unkindness, vengeance upon those we consider the enemies of faith. Soon we shall be free of this world and let us not contribute to the hatred in it.

By the same token, we do not go overboard the other way. We do not submit to enemies ways, we do not go to excess with them, we do not party with them, we lead the conversation on our terms, we set an example to them. Peter puts it nicely, *1Pe 4:1 Christ suffered here on earth. Now you must be ready to suffer as he did, because suffering shows that you have stopped sinning. 1Pe 4:2 It means you have turned from your own desires and want to obey God for the rest of your life. Pe 4:3 You have already lived long enough like people who don't know God. You were immoral and followed your evil desires. You went around drinking and partying and carrying on. In fact, you even worshiped disgusting idols. 1Pe 4:4 **Now your former friends wonder why you have stopped running around with them, and they curse you for it.** 1Pe 4:5 But they will have to answer to God, who judges the living and the dead.* CEV.

In times past says Peter, we were just like those people, people who now hate us and blaspheme against us. We did not know God, we were immoral, we were drinking and partying and carrying on, and we worshipped idols. These people, it

says, were our former friends, but are no longer friends, and they wonder what has happened to us and they curse us. They will answer to God for their behaviour and you must keep a respectable distance from them, helping them where it is necessary, but keeping to your own company, to believers. You are not the unbelievers servants, at their beck and call.

The trials and tribulations are often best seen in a life well lived, and that can give us encouragement. I want to look very briefly at the trials and triumph of Watchman Nee.

Nee Shu-tsu, whose English name was Henry Nee, was born of second-generation Christian parents in Foochow, China in 1903. His paternal grandfather, in fact, had studied at the American Congregational College in Foochow and became the first Chinese pastor among the Congregationalists in northern Fukien province. Nee Shu-tsu had been consecrated to the Lord before his birth. Desiring a son, his mother had prayed to the Lord, "If I have a boy, I will present him to You." The Lord answered her prayer, and soon afterward Nee Shu-tsu was born. His father later impressed on him, "Before you were born, your mother promised to present you to the Lord".

Prior to his salvation Nee Shu-tsu was an ill-behaved student, yet he was also exceptionally intelligent. He always ranked first in his class as well as in his school, from elementary school through his graduation from Anglican Trinity College in Foochow. He had many grand dreams and plans for the future and could have had great success in the world. Yet Nee Shu-tsu, acquainted with the gospel since childhood, had the deep realization that if he received Jesus as his Lord for salvation he must also serve Him.

In 1920, after a considerable struggle, seventeen-year-old Nee Shu-tsu, still a high school student, was dynamically saved. At the moment of his salvation, all his previous planning became void and his future career was entirely abandoned. He testified, "From the evening I was saved, I began to have a new life, for the life of the eternal God had entered into me". Later, after being raised up by the Lord to carry out His commission, he adopted the new English name Watchman and the new Chinese name To-sheng, which means "watchman's rattle," for he considered himself a watchman raised up to sound a warning call in the dark night.

Watchman Nee attended no theological schools or Bible institutes. His wealth of knowledge concerning God's purpose, Christ, the things of the Spirit, and the church was acquired through studying the Bible and reading spiritual books. Watchman Nee became intimately familiar with

and greatly enlightened by the Word through diligent study using twenty different methods. In addition, in the early days of his ministry he spent one-third of his income on his personal needs, one-third on helping others, and the remaining third on spiritual books. He acquired a collection of more than 3,000 of the best Christian books, including nearly all the classical Christian writers from the first century on. He had a phenomenal ability to select, comprehend, discern, and memorize relevant material, and he could grasp and retain the main points of a book at a glance. Watchman Nee was thus able to glean all the profitable scriptural points and spiritual principles from throughout church history and synthesize them into his vision and practice of the Christian life and of the church life.

Watchman Nee was also frequently afflicted with serious ill health. For the first eleven years of his ministry, beginning in 1922, he suffered alone, with no wife to help him. During this time he contracted tuberculosis and suffered acutely for several years. In 1934 at the age of thirty, however, Watchman Nee married a true "help meet," Charity Chang, although the Lord was to give them no children. In later years, he was also stricken with a chronic stomach disorder as well as angina pectoris, a serious heart ailment. He was never cured of the heart disease and could have died from it at any moment. In fact, many times he ministered not by physical strength but by resurrection life.

He also suffered for his belief that, according to the Bible, denominations are wrong in that they divide the one Body of Christ. Because his firm stand for the oneness of the Body of Christ was a testimony against the denominations, they caused him much suffering. Some despised, criticized, opposed, and did their best to destroy his ministry. They also spread false rumours about him and misrepresented him to the extent that Watchman Nee once responded, "The Watchman Nee portrayed by them I would also condemn."

A number of brothers and sisters meeting with the local churches became another source of suffering to Watchman Nee. He found this type of suffering by far the most painful. Some of these believers caused a great deal of trouble due to their dissention, immaturity, incompetence, stubbornness, ambition for position, or rebelliousness. Two years after the church life began to be practiced in Watchman Nee's hometown in 1922, he was even temporarily excommunicated by his own co-workers because of his stand for the truth of the Scriptures, when he protested against the ordination of the leading co-workers by a denominational missionary. Although most of the believers meeting with them sided with Watchman Nee, the Lord would not allow him to

do anything to vindicate himself. That was a deep suffering to his natural man.

The final source of suffering was his groundless condemnation and imprisonment. Watchman Nee was arrested during the Communist Cultural Revolution in March 1952 and was judged, falsely condemned, and unjustly sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment in 1956.

Watchman Nee was a man of sorrows and suffering. Along his entire path of following the Lamb, he suffered much. Through all these sufferings, however, he learned many lessons. These sufferings not only helped him learn to trust the Lord; they also benefited him in dealing with his flesh, his self, his soul, and his natural life. Due to his obedience to these dealings, he never passed on mere teachings and doctrines, for his messages contained the reality he had acquired through his sufferings. The experience he gained through his suffering served as an immeasurable help to all those under his ministry and also became a rich heritage to all the local churches, a heritage acquired by him at the ultimate price.

His sufferings also helped him to receive further revelation from the Lord. Certain kinds of suffering often issued in corresponding revelation. His sufferings thus often became the Lord's revelation to him. He was purified, dealt with, broken, and constituted by the Holy Spirit with the divine life through his sufferings. Through such experiences of Christ within his sufferings, he, like Paul, was prepared and positioned to receive the Lord's revelation.

Watchman Nee was arrested by the Communists in March, 1952 for his professed faith in Christ as well as his leadership among the local churches. He was judged, falsely condemned, and sentenced in 1956 to fifteen years' imprisonment. During this entire time, only his wife was allowed to visit him. Although there is no way for us to know what he experienced of the Lord during his long imprisonment, his last eight letters provide a glimpse into his suffering, feeling, and expectation during his confinement.

While prison censorship did not allow him to mention the Lord's name in his letters, in his final letter, written on the day of his death, he alluded to his joy in the Lord: "In my sickness, I still remain joyful at heart." Watchman Nee was practicing the word of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always." He died in confinement in his cell on May 30, 1972. Humanly speaking, he died in misery and humiliation. Not one relative or brother or sister in the Lord was with him. There was no proper notification of his death and no funeral. He

was cremated on June 1, 1972. His wife had died six months earlier, so it was her eldest sister who was informed of his death and cremation. She retrieved his ashes, and they were buried with Mrs. Nee's in his hometown of Kwanchao in the county of Haining, Chekiang province. In May, 1989, the ashes of Watchman Nee and his wife were transferred to and buried in "The Christian Cemetery" in Shiangshan in the city of Soochow of Kiangsu province.

Not only did Watchman suffer from unbelievers, he suffered from believers, *Luk 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Luk 6:28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

He was leaving this earth about the same time I entered into the Kingdom. He had finished his journey, and I, not having yet heard of him, was starting mine. The Lord had another class to teach, the same type of people, the same sins, the same old presuppositions about Christianity. How patient is the Lord, bringing many sons to Glory.

Here on the final approach, God reveals what it is to really love Him as He has loved us and forgiven us. Above all, like Him, we must hate no man.

44. Give it all away *Luke 6: 29 - 30*

Luk 6:29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Luk 6:30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

We are told this time that if you get punched, take it without retaliation, and if someone asks for your property, give it to them, without asking anything for it. Crazy? Yes it is, and you cannot run a business like that or you will bankrupt yourself very quickly and likely to get beaten to a pulp.

The exact conditions to which the words apply are not stated. It is a moral conundrum which we have to sort out for our self. The demands could be just or they could be unjust, you have to decide. You could be in the right or in the wrong as far as the person hitting you is concerned. The persons who strikes you could be robbers and thieves, or you could have offended someone and they are out for revenge, or they could be someone who is annoyed at you and wants to hit you, or they could be the Romans conquerors who just like bossing people about. The people who take from you could be scammers, trying it on to get your property by trickery, they could be the needy poor, they could be someone who is playing on your compassion, and they could be starving. It does not say the

conditions, but I think that I see a thread going through this story and it is to avoid revenge and to have nothing that you cling to.

I implied last time that God was teaching us to love Him, and also **how He loves us**. The Beatitudes, are not just a lesson on how we are to behave from our hearts, the “be attitudes”, but they are a lesson on the nature of God. Lessons on how He deals with us, even though we don’t appreciate it initially, and what we are to change into to, to become like Him.

Do you think that God wants to inhabit eternity with a load of selfish, evil people? They are the ones that He discards, but to see Him, being the pure in heart, is the miracle of transformation, *Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

They will be a reflection of His Glory, the Glory of His Kingdom, *Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, **the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God**, Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; Rev 21:12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of **the twelve tribes of the children of Israel**:*

Jerusalem, the City of God, is **built in Heaven**, not upon the earth. It has taken the labour of centuries to build, with the blood of martyrs, and the hearts of the faithful, and it has in its makeup, twelve gates, which have the names of twelve tribes inscribed upon them. Those gate are made of people, Israelites, not of the natural tribes but of the spiritual nation, the Israel of God, *Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

Do you still believe that God will build the earthly city of Jerusalem when He has said, *Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* Do you really think that God will have the entire earthly nation of Israel in Glory, when they abused Him and killed Him? I think not. The gates of “Jerusalem” symbolise the Israel of God, the point of entry to the city and they reflect His Glory and. We must remember these

lessons that Jesus teaches, are to bring us to the condition, where we are made ready to enter the Kingdom of God.

These lessons for us are so easy to say, but so very hard to do. It is easier to give things to family than it is to give things to strangers. How can we give away to all who take, and how can we keep turning the cheek to be smitten? The book of Hebrews says, *Heb 12:3 Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up.* So we will and we learn some lessons from Jesus.

Its no good just being “saved”, in fact, it is you who say you are saved, but does your demeanour say otherwise? The Lord wants you to be like Him, Holy as well, *1Pe 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 1Pe 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.* So do you consider yourself Holy, a separate person, separate from the sins of the world, devoted unto God? That is what is needed and it is a big ask.

The common grace of God and its corollary common curse, is seen in God's dealings with us, *Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on **the evil and on the good**, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

God is kind to evil people, and thereby sets us an example of doing good to our enemies. If we don't do the same works as God, we show that we are definitely not part of His family, not His children. By hitting back at people we show our birth father, the devil. If anybody had a right to curse a man, He did, yet He held back from this and suffered and He did not even threaten them.

1Pe 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 1Pe 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

This is an astounding view of humility and it at once raises the question, if Jesus is God, how come that He smote people in the OT and commanded His followers to smite as well? There is a difference between longsuffering and ultimately punishing transgression. How long has He patiently born with your sins, how do they cry unto heaven, day after day, and He seems to do nothing. You prosper in your wickedness and see no need for God. *Jer 12:1 Whenever I complain to you, LORD, you are always fair. But now I have questions about your justice. Why is life easy for sinners? Why are they successful? Jer 12:2 You plant them like trees; you let them prosper and produce fruit. Yet even when they praise you, they don't mean it. CEV.*

What did God do? Take the case of Sodom. The problems at Sodom had been going on for a long time. God had given them a very pleasant land to live in, *Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar, but this act of kindness did not turn them to God.*

Eventually, the “cry” of the place came before God, but He was still longsuffering with them, and went among the people of Sodom to see if it was true, *Gen 18:20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; Gen 18:21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.* God suffered them a long time and they had a chance to stop their behaviour, but they did not.

God’s angels finally punished the men, then having secured the righteous persons, He destroyed the city, *Gen 19:10 But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. Gen 19:11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.....Gen 19:24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; Gen 19:25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.*

The Lord was just in His judgement at Sodom and equally just in killing the first born of Egypt. It was the last of the plagues to hit Egypt, and the people had been warned about it and they knew it was coming. There was a way of avoiding it, by having the blood upon the door posts and lintels, by being covered by the blood, so that it was disregarded at your peril, *Exo 12:27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.....Exo 12:29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.*

They continually disobeyed the Lord so that it was an act of justice in killing them. He warned them, they continued to disobey He would kill the firstborn and He smote them. Before you get all sentimental and say the children were “innocent” and why should they suffer, you should consider two things. Firstly they would be judged for Adam’s sin and so they were **not** innocent. Secondly, it was Christ who executed judgement. When men are judged, it is before the Judgement seat of Christ, *2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment*

seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

And should you consider this act of killing the children in Egypt a double standard by Christ, in view of Him saying, *Luk 18:16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, **Suffer little children to come unto me**, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Luk 18:17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein*, it is not. Those people, parents or others, who permit their children to come to Him are the ones who enter the Kingdom, those who do not permit them will watch them go the way of the World to death and destruction.

We shall come to the nature of the human heart and its obduracy in the OT, but suffice to say for now, that it was matched by the punishments of God that were equally just.

The Divine nature is however seen in the Beatitudes. It is not God imposing something upon us for the sake of being cruel or unkind. It is showing His nature, it is saying, “be like Me”, *Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: **for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.***

But beware also, *Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* God is not mocked or deceived, longsuffering, yes, but not forever. He wants us to have the divine nature, *2Pe 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* He wants us to be like Him.

I never really got this message when I came to Christ, it was not preached to my understanding that I was being saved to be the “*children of your Father which is in heaven*”. I thought I was just being saved from sin, some of my worst characteristics, some of the worldliness that was in me. I thought I was saved so that I could go on living the life I wanted to, but with a Christian bias, doing my own thing from a Christian world view. Carrying on as normal, mixing on equal terms with the non-believer but just being slightly different, going along with their behaviour, only now, my behaviour was better. I had not considered the nature of the adoption by God. He wanted more of me than to be a hymn singer on Sunday’s, saying the right words to make other Christians happy. He wanted a son and I did not know what that meant in terms of commitment.

Take those words, *Luk 6:29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Luk 6:30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.* I could not honestly do that. If someone had hit me or those I loved, I would have given them a thorough working over, and I would feel that I was right to do it, and because Moses suggested it was OK, I was OK.

If anyone had taken anything from me without asking, I would attempt to get it back and I would look for something else to take as well, to redress the balance. Did not Moses say, *Exo 22:1 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.* I had not realised that I was still behaving as if I was under the schoolmaster, that I had a hard heart, and that I knew nothing of the grace of Christ.

It was with this attitude that I could have easily become God's hangman, meting out justice on the ungodly, I could happily go to war, fighting as those generations before me fought, killing possibly Christians of another nation, in the quest to subdue this earth for Christ. I was a law man, and had not considered how Christ impacts on us as new creations. How wrong is that?

What sort of person does Christ want me to be?

45. Do as you would be done by *Luke 6: 31*

Luk 6:31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Charles Kingsley (born 12th June 1819 , died 23rd January 1875), who lived for most of his life a few miles from where I am ministering today, in Eversley, Hampshire. He was a broad church minister of the Church of England, a university professor, social reformer, historian, novelist and poet. He is particularly associated with Christian socialism, the working men's college, and forming labour cooperatives, which failed, but encouraged later working reforms. He was a friend and correspondent of Charles Darwin and he wrote a popular children's book, "Tom and the Water-Babies".

The Water-Babies, a Fairy Tale for a Land Baby, was written between 1862 – 63, as a serial for Macmillan's Magazine, and was first published in its entirety in 1863. It was written as part satire in support of Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species", published in 1859. The book was extremely popular in the United Kingdom and was a mainstay of British children's literature for many decades, but eventually fell out of favour in America in part due to its claimed prejudices against Irish, Jews, Catholics and Americans.

In his *Origin of Species*, Darwin mentions that, like many others at the time that he thought that changed habits produce an inherited effect, a concept now known as Lamarckism. In *The Water Babies*, Kingsley tells of a group of humans called the Doasyoulikes, who are allowed to do "whatever they like" and who gradually lose the power of speech, degenerate into gorillas and are shot by the African explorer, Paul Du Chaillu, who was famous at the time for confirming the existence of gorillas. He refers to the movement to end slavery, in mentioning that one of the gorillas shot by Du Chaillu, "remembered that his ancestors had once been men, and tried to say, 'Am I Not A Man And A Brother?', but had forgotten how to use his tongue."

The Darwinian controversy also gave rise to C H Spurgeon, the great Baptist minister, giving his "Gorilla Lecture". On October 1st 1861, Spurgeon gave a popular lecture at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the subject of the recently discovered African "gorilla" and its alleged evolutionary kinship to mankind; a full-sized stuffed gorilla shared the platform with Spurgeon. Here is an extract,

He is an enormous ape, which claims to approach the nearest to man of any other creature. How nearly he approaches, I leave you to judge. True, his claim to be our first cousin is disputed (on behalf of the koolo-kamba [i.e. west African chimpanzee]), by several very learned men. If we should, therefore, admit you (addressing the gorilla) to be man's first cousin, we fear that the koolo-kamba might institute a suit at law to claim equal rights, and so many cousins would be far from convenient. Besides, I have heard that, if we should admit this gentleman to be our cousin, there is Mr. Darwin, who at once is prepared to prove that that our great-grandfather's grandfather's father—keep on for about a millennium or two,—was a guinea-pig, and that we were ourselves originally descended from oysters, or seaweeds, or starfishes.

Now, I demur to that on my own account. Any bearded gentleman here, who chooses to do so, may claim relationship with the oyster; and others may imagine that they are only developed gorillas; but I, for my own part, believe there is a great gulf fixed between us, so that they who would pass from us to you (again turning to the gorilla) cannot; neither can they come to us who would pass from thence. At the same time, I do not wish to hold an argument with the philosopher who thinks himself related to a gorilla; I do not care to claim the honour for myself, but anyone else is perfectly welcome to it.

In Kingsley's book, Tom, a young chimney sweep falls into a river after encountering an upper-class girl named Ellie and is chased out of her house. There he appears to drown and is transformed into a "water-baby", as he is told

so by a caddisfly (an insect that sheds its skin) and begins his moral education. The story is thematically concerned with Christian redemption, though Kingsley also uses the book to argue that England treats its poor badly, and to question child labour, among other themes.

Tom embarks on a series of adventures and lessons, and enjoys the community of other water-babies on Saint Brendan's Island once he proves himself a moral creature. The major spiritual leaders in his new world are the fairies Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby (a reference to the Golden Rule), Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, and Mother Carey. Weekly, Tom is allowed the company of Ellie, who became a water-baby after he did.

Grimes, his old master, drowns as well, and in his final adventure, Tom travels to the end of the world to attempt to help the man where he is being punished for his misdeeds. Tom helps Grimes to find repentance, and Grimes will be given a second chance if he can successfully perform a final penance. By proving his willingness to do things he does not like, if they are the right things to do, Tom earns himself a return to human form, and becomes "a great man of science" who "can plan railways, and steam-engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns, and so forth". He and Ellie are united, although the book states (perhaps jokingly) that they never marry, claiming that in fairy tales, no one beneath the rank of prince and princess ever marries.

The book ends with the caveat that it is only a fairy tale, and the reader is to believe none of it, "even if it is true."

So Darwinism spawned a fairy tale by Kingsley, and to use Kingsley's own words, "and the reader is to believe none of it". But look what this fairy tale also did, it develops ethics out of an evolutionary world, from the jungle of meaninglessness, order arises, and from the disorder, a morality appears which issues in the Golden rule. All from nothing, all from disorder, all from atoms which know nothing arises this great truth. What an amazing fairy tale evolution is.

Mrs "Do as you would be done by", is the "**ethic of reciprocity**" (otherwise known as the Golden Rule), which has been advocated by philosophers from Socrates onwards as a basis for practical morality, and is advocated by most of the world's major religions. Jesus propounded it in the Sermon on the Mount when He said "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Prophet Muhammad, in his last sermon, admonished believers to "hurt no one so that no one may hurt you". Confucius said in *The Analects*, "Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself." The Dalai Lama put it in a different, thought-provoking, form when he said, "If you want others to be happy, practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion." It is a

clearly well established principle, though how it could come out of Darwinism, out of a mindless universe, out of an evolutionary thought, puzzles me and it might as well say “do what you want because it doesn’t matter”. Any person’s belief is valid in a meaningless universe.

Nietzsche is a philosopher who sums this viewpoint precisely, and he is the logical outcome of the evolutionist thinking. Nietzsche attacked traditional ethical theories, especially those rooted in religion. He rejected the view that people are ultimately accountable only to God. He did so because he believed that human life had no moral purpose except for the meaning that human beings gave it.

Nietzsche was extremely critical of most traditional (unbelieving) ethics. He called Utilitarianism the “morality of the herd.” Utilitarianism is an effort to provide an answer to the practical question “What ought a person to do?” The answer is that a person ought to act so as to maximize happiness or pleasure and to minimize unhappiness or pain. He urged people to make their own moral choices rather than to unthinkingly accept the values of the majority. Nietzsche viewed most ethical ideas as attempts by people to protect themselves against dynamic and powerful individuals. He rejected Kant’s morality of intentions by stating that the value of any action lay in the unintentional, especially those motives that are below the surface of the conscious mind.

Nietzsche’s new interpretation, which he cast in terms of “will to power,” was linked to a project he called the “revaluation of all values.” It revolved around the ideas of an “enhancement of life” and an attainable “higher humanity.” Nietzsche’s **Two** Moralities: Master morality and Slave morality sum up his position.

Master morality is the morality of the noble individual, who is egoistic, hard, intolerant, but bound by a code to honour his peers. The noble individual defines harm entirely in terms of what is harmful to himself and despises altruism and humility.

Slave morality represents the denial of life and **Master morality** represents the will to power. The will to power is the primal life force whose essence is the overpowering and suppression of what is alien and weaker.

Slave morality emphasizes compassion, patience and turning the other cheek.

For Nietzsche, the Golden Rule and respect for others were the types of ethical principles that led to the weakening of a society. The drives and energy of the individual, especially the darkness of power of unconscious forces and emotions, must be respected and exalted. He believed that the strong and the determined few in a society were essential for social progress. Conventional morality

hampered these essential, superior individuals. The dark, dangerous, and more passionate aspects of human existence must be emphasized.

Nietzsche died in an insane asylum.

We see that the Golden rule is a law that is upheld by the Creator, *Mat 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is **the law and the prophets***. Who made that law? To some it is self evident and can be seen to make this life better, if we “do unto others as we would be done by”, to the hardened atheist it is a weakness to be exploited by the strong.

Yet it is a law built into the fabric of life itself by that creative finger of God. It was built into the universe as an everlasting principle by God, who decreed that the mechanics of the universe would better serve the purposes of the creatures, if they had a mutual respect for one another. You do not have to be a believer in Christ to see this, any more than you have to be a believer in Christ to see the sun. **It is a law of life.**

God showed this Golden rule, the ethic of reciprocity, in the laws of Deuteronomy. What greater neighbour can we have than God Himself, He is our land lord and we own nothing, *Lev 25:23 No land may be permanently bought or sold. It all belongs to me—it isn't your land, and you only live there for a little while.* CEV. Getting on with God was essential to a good life, and if you wanted good to happen to you, you had to be good for God.

*Deu 27:9 And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God. Deu 27:10 Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day. Deu 27:11 And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, Deu 27:12 **These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people**, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: Deu 27:13 And **these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse**; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.*

You can read about those blessings and curses in the following chapters of Deuteronomy, and there are plenty of them. The point I am making is that this law of reciprocity, the Golden rule, is not an option for this life. It has profound consequences for all men. **It will work regardless of whether you believe it, whether you are religious or not and the fall out over the lives of men will be severe.** That is why even men who do not have faith in Christ, still see it as a fundamental law of human relationships, because it is built into life. It can also be seen in the relationship with the Lord, that by disobedience and sin, a curse will follow.

Because we do not have the OT style of prophet, standing up and explaining the things that God is doing in the world, does not mean that He is not doing them. The law of gravity works, as far as we know, throughout the universe, and we do not even know what gravity is, only the results of gravity, but you will soon learn those effects if you jump out of a 20 story building. The law of reciprocity is like that, and you will soon learn its effects, if you oppose it. Eventually it will catch up with you.

This raises a fundamental question which is, “**does morality effect the physical state of being, does a moral law have physical consequences in the world?**” To which I answer yes. Take the original transgression of our parents in the garden. The original sin. The breaking of a rule that God laid down for the benefit of man, had universal consequences for the natural world. **Morality affected the physical state of the universe.**

But it does not necessarily affect it at once. The land Sabbath was not observed for 490 years, but it was going to be kept, and the nation went into exile while it kept it. When man sinned in the garden, he would die, the wages of sin being death, but the payment was made in the man's future. David suffered for what he had done, *2Sa 12:8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. 2Sa 12:9 Wherefore hast thou **despised the commandment of the LORD**, to do evil in his sight? **thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite** with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. 2Sa 12:10 Now therefore **the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me**, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. 2Sa 12:11 Thus saith the LORD, **Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house**, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 2Sa 12:12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*

You may have been forgiven your “sin” but you bear the consequences of it. If you lost a limb through foolishness, then God doesn't re-grow it as part of the process of forgiveness. The drunkard, the adulterer, the thief, the murderer, the covetous person and so on will still bear the consequence of their sin. *Num 32:20 And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, Num 32:21 And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, Num 32:22 And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. Num 32:23 **But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.***

As David Guzik said “there may be sins in our past that are still growing”.

Our text warns us that what we do has universal consequences, *Mat 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is **the law and the prophets**.*

46. The quality of mercy *Luke 6: 32 - 36*

Luk 6:32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. Luk 6:33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. Luk 6:34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. Luk 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Luk 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

These verses follow on from the Golden rule, the ethic of reciprocity, *Luk 6:31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise*. In a world which cares more for self, cares more for those we know, than for the rest of men, even our enemies, I want to pause for a while and consider the state of man in the 21st century, in the light of what we have already said about sin, and how it has permeated the universe.

We said that sin has a cosmic effect and disorder is the result of sin. Death is an example of disorder, of increasing entropy, increasing chaos, and so from a good start our body goes downhill, wrinkled, weak, failing, all the way to death and the grave. All the components for life are present in the graveyard, all that was man, but nature cannot put man together again, and evolution will not work. Like the hump backed King Richard III, once broken, humpty dumpty could not be mended.

Did we have the general law of entropy, disorder, the 2nd law of thermodynamics, before the fall of man? Why should things age and decay? The ancient of days does not age and decay, *Isa 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. Isa 40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

In God's world, the only thing that does not age or decay is Him, *Heb 1:10 The Scriptures also say, "In the beginning, Lord, you were the one who laid the foundation of the earth and created the heavens. Heb 1:11 They will all disappear and wear out like clothes, but you will last forever. Heb 1:12 You will*

years. *Psa 90:10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

Whether this imposition, the declining span of life, was a judgement of God or part of a natural process we do not know. However, his sin continued and multiplied. Man did not get better, he got worse, and it is a great mercy that tyrants do not live much beyond their allotted span.

By the time we get to Daniel, and the kingdoms revealed in Daniel's dream, we see a pattern emerging, *Dan 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, Dan 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Dan 2:34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.....Dan 2:38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. Dan 2:39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. Dan 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. Dan 2:41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. Dan 2:42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. Dan 2:43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

The successive kingdoms were degenerating, that is according to the preciousness of the substance they were symbolically made of. That implies that the king and the citizens of the kingdom were becoming less and less pure as time went on. We get an insight into the battles raging in the unseen world that plays a role in the events of men, when Gabriel and Michael are delayed by the "Sar" of Persia who resists them, ***Dan 10:13*** *But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

The sins of a king, like for instance David, had an effect on the people, *2Sa 24:10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I*

beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. 2Sa 24:11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 2Sa 24:12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 2Sa 24:13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. 2Sa 24:14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

Rulers, even those chosen by God, can have a disastrous affect on man, as far as sin is concerned. We suffer the effects of sin, even though we do not commit the self same evils. You and I suffer, in part the evil of men, for which we played no part. The cumulative sins of others are still reaping their wages, the cry of man goes up to heaven continually, the sins written on the wall of life, and like an unseen disease it wreaks havoc on this world.

Have you considered where sin goes, where the evil of generations of men, the accumulated sin of history goes? It is not all forgiven by Christ, in fact He only forgives those who come to Him, *Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Those who do not want Him remain in their sin, *Joh 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. Joh 9:40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Joh 9:41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; **therefore your sin remaineth.*** There is no atonement, no sacrifice and offering for the man who does not want it.

Does sin wither on the vine and die out, does its power over men cease with time? It must be dealt with and punished to fulfil the Righteousness of God, and it will, and that is why this sin blackened universe, with all its accumulated sin, unforgiven but not forgotten, will be taken and consumed, destroyed by fire, *2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and **the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.** 2Pe 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.*

God does not put His holy temple on the foundation of a corrupt world, He builds a new world or new life, incorruptible, *Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* Those misguided men have failed to see the sin which corrupts this world and makes it unsuitable for Gods dwelling.

Unlike the secret battles of heaven which have occurred out of human sight in the past, Christ openly battles evil, *Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* Or as the GNB puts it, *Col 2:15 And on that cross Christ freed himself from the power of the spiritual rulers and authorities; he made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession.* GNB.

Just as sin is writ large upon this world, so I believe is goodness. The unseen hand writing the evil of men, also writes with the finger of God, the good man does, *Mat 26:12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Mat 26:13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

The good that we do, the respect for God, the fellowship which we have with one another, is noted and recorded by God, even if we do not see it, *Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. Mal 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.* It is like the minutes of our time spent, recorded faithfully, by the Heavenly Secretary.

Which brings us back to our text, *Luk 6:32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. Luk 6:33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. Luk 6:34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. Luk 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and **ye shall be the children of the Highest**: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. **Luk 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.***

It is your duty to be merciful, to be good to all men, for then “**ye shall be the children of the Highest**”. It is not a slog, something hard that God has imposed upon us, it is a joy, and He is watching it with delight and recording it. We do want to be His children don't we?

This is the battleground with the “principalities and powers in heavenly places”, it is where we, the church prevails over the gates of death, where we strike a blow for our Lord, not in the manner of evil warfare, conducted by sinful men, but in every kind deed we do, every act of mercy we show, as Jesus walked among men, so we must walk, and “try His works to do”.

Rom 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

47. Its alright to judge, but..... Luke 6: 37 - 42

Luk 6:37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Luk 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. Luk 6:39 And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? Luk 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. Luk 6:41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Luk 6:42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Judging becomes a regular pastime among some people who call themselves Christians. Having, they think, become freed from their own sins, they then adopt the role of “witch finder General”, and go around to find faults in others, particularly other Christians. It makes them feel good, super righteous, and they relish their task, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

Being better than someone, after all, gives you a sense of power over them, and makes you feel good about yourself, and you forget that you are like the very person you condemn. This behaviour leads to some stereotypes of Christianity which the world sees, and magnifies, so the true Christians are made to suffer with these false brethren. The devil will always sow his falsehood, the tares, among the wheat, but sometimes the complaints against Christians are justified.

It is a universal truth that humanity is going down the tube, and all flesh is corrupt, *Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:* You would think that out of this struggling mass of broken humanity, the ones who

say they had been delivered from wrath, saved from hell, would be a little more understanding of those who have not. After all, if they have undergone a complete change in their mindset, their world view, they must at least acknowledge that they have been delivered from a life that condemned them to death, that twisted their understanding, and that made them behave as enemies of God? They must surely have an empathy with their fallen brothers?

Imagine that you find yourself alone on a boat with the engine broken, drifting in a wild sea, the waves churning the waters about you, the wind howling above you, dark skies closing fast around you, sinking as the sea breaks over the boat, you realise that you have only moments left in this life and you cry to God to help you. Then it happens, miracle of miracles, a lifeboat pounding through the waves, a rope shot over your boat, secure from harm, you are rescued from all danger. You have a tale to tell, you have a story about the brave men who saved your life, you cannot sing their praises enough, you thank God for hearing your prayer and perhaps you make a contribution to the lifeboat men.

I do not expect that in the future, you will look at people in trouble on the ocean in quite the same way. I do not expect that you will say to yourself, "its their own silly fault that they got into that predicament". I expect you will know the horrors of what they are going through, that you will sympathise, that you will do all within your power to help them and if you cannot save them you will be the first to call for them to be rescued. You have undergone a complete change in your understanding of that situation of helplessness, and having experience of it first hand and you have sympathy for the suffering.

When you come to Christ for His help in life's troubles you do not expect an inquisition from Him or His people. You expect saving from sin if you have come to Christ for that, and nothing less. You would not stand on the deck of a sinking ship arguing with the coxswain about the type of knots you were using to make fast your boat, whether you could pay for the rescue, where you had come from and what you were doing going out in such weather. You would just want peace to float over you and to be rescued.

You do not need an inquest over your folly, over your lack of skill in handling the boat, the failures in judgement that led to your being rescued. You do that yourself, and you kick yourself for it. That is called repentance. Some people see it very clearly, like Mary, *Luk 7:43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. Luk 7:44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Luk 7:45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Luk 7:46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Luk 7:47* **Wherefore I say unto**

thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Luk 7:48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

Jesus did not dwell on the woman's sins, which incidentally were many, only upon her kindness and love to Him. She was distraught at her sins, and in the only way she knew how, was trying to show her repentance and love for Him. She did not need someone to tell her how foolish she had been, how wicked, how Godless, for that was obvious to her.

There was another story that Jesus told of a servant, *Mat 18:24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. Mat 18:25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. Mat 18:32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Mat 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* It was not only forgive, it was also forget.

Having been forgiven, knowing what it is like to be forgiven, we too should forgive. Also, Christians who take pleasure in telling other Christians their faults, when they have not asked for it and when they do not deserve it, should take a lesson from Jesus. He does not lay the burden of sin on the head of a man labouring under sins guilt and seeking forgiveness. He forgives and He tells us to do likewise.

Now it is not wrong to make judgements and you have to make judgements in life. You are always making them and the ability to make a decision one way or another is one of God's greatest gifts to us. It is good because it does not leave us rudderless in the universe. We are by this gift of judgement, given to make choices and it is sometimes mistaken for free will. Take for example the verses in, *Rom 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Rom 3:13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Rom 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Rom 3:15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: Rom 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: Rom 3:17 And the way of peace have they not known: Rom 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

That says that it is not possible for a natural man to do any good and there is no fear of God in them. How does that man have absolute free will, it is impossible?

He is bound by his evil nature, contrary to God, how is that freedom, *Job 5:7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*. He cannot will himself to do good, because his whole nature opposes it. But he can make judgements and the judgements will always err on the side on evil.

Likewise, the man who is a Christian is also not free, because he can make some errors in judgement. In fact it is only possible to be truly free when you do God's will, as Christ did, *Joh 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him*. How do we know what pleases God? The guide to which the Christian submits himself is the word of God and that is really what should single him out to be a Christian. The word may be known by him in part only and that may lead to some erroneous conclusions of judgement.

Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. It is saying do not judge in a manner in which the judgement can be turned against you. Do not judge in the very matter that you fail in. For example, *Exo 2:11 After Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were hard at work, and he saw an Egyptian beating one of them. Exo 2:12 Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching, then he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. Exo 2:13 When Moses went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting. So he went to the man who had started the fight and asked, "Why are you beating up one of your own people?" Exo 2:14 The man answered, "Who put you in charge of us and made you our judge? Are you planning to kill me, just as you killed that Egyptian?" This frightened Moses because he was sure that people must have found out what had happened*. CEV.

Moses had failed the first test of good leadership, and that was partiality. He discriminated against the wrong doing of the Egyptian and the Israelite, and what was good for the Egyptian was not good for the Israeli. Moses was a hypocrite.

All people who judge a person unfairly are hypocrites. Like our British Post Office which went to great lengths to cover up the fact that there were bugs in the "Horizon" computer system, which led to the wrongful prosecution of 732 sub-postmasters (SPMs) for theft, false accounting and/or fraud. The prosecutions, civil actions, and extortions resulted in criminal convictions, false confessions, imprisonments, defamation, loss of livelihood, bankruptcy, divorce, and suicide. All this was done in order to protect a computer system. The case rattles on, but for one person who committed suicide there is only heavens justice to come.

The judgement against another person, believer or unbeliever, was not wrong, but Jesus was trying to stop this sort of hypocrisy, "*Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye*". Trying to conduct a bit of high level spiritual

surgery, trying to do eye surgery and remove a speck from someone's eye, required a steady hand and an unencumbered vision. How could you possibly see clearly enough to do the job, when your eyesight was obscured by a whacking great plank in your own eye?

It is a preposterous image that Jesus presents. It is almost a comic sketch. Two comedians, Laurel and Hardy, falling about on a stage, tripping over one another, trying to remove an unseen speck from one comics eye while having a large plank, hitting him round the head, from the other clumsy comic. Another fine mess you've gotten me into.

The point is well made by the ridiculous comparison. It is reinforced by the image of two blind men walking down the road, one acting as a guide for the other. How can he possibly do that if he cannot see, and the one being led is just as foolish to let him lead him? He cannot possibly be a guide if he cannot see. I am reminded of another story about a blind man, told by dear George Whitfield,

Another time, one Sunday evening, the infidel Lord Chesterfield sat in Lady Huntingdon's pew listening to the great preacher. Then God spoke to the nobleman's heart, and he was forced to pay attention.

"Oh, poor sinner," Whitefield was saying, "you are in the earth like a poor blind beggar who is walking along a dangerous road. Look at him! He hears one and then another fall over the cliff! Crash! Oh the wailing of the lost! But the blind man feels like he's at least not in too much danger while his little dog remains with him. See how he holds onto the leash with white knuckles. Now he must be careful, for he is near the edge of the precipice. Oh look, the dog has escaped, and the blind man has to feel his way with his stick. He holds it out in front and gropes his way cautiously along! There! The stick has slipped out of his fingers! It has fallen off into the abyss! The old man stoops to pick it up. 'Be careful, old man — be careful — the edge of the cliff is crumbling away beneath your feet!' He stumbles forward; he can't save himself."

"He's over the edge! Over the edge!" shouted Chesterfield, jumping up from his seat as if he would help the old beggar and reach out to pull him back to safety. He himself, like that blind man, had tried to feel his way through life by the help of wealth, politeness, and reason, which alone can never lead to God.

Friend, you will certainly fall into the bottomless pit of eternal punishment unless Jesus Christ is your Shepherd and unless He heals your blind eyes and gives you sight. He alone can save. And even as one of His sheep, you can't feel your own way safely through the many dangers of daily life unless you let Him be your Guide.

In our day, with so much slick visual presentations, the spoken word does not have the same impact on the imagination as it did in times past. People were brought by the words of the preacher into the very realm of the reality that he spoke of, they were in that scene in the story, living the moment with the characters. I imagine that it was also true in Jesus day, that the imagination of the hearers saw the truths that He spoke of with greater clarity, unencumbered by other things. Our imagination fails because of the garbage that fills our heads with the superficial rubbish of virtual reality and we look on these stories as being quaint but lacking the power to move us. It is not the stories that lack power, it is our imaginations. The imaginations that we have exercised for us, not exercised by us.

Yes, we have little imagination today and we will have less and less, with everything presented to us. We don't need imaginations, when for example, a book out of which we conjured a thousand thoughts and dreams is given to us on a plate, is presented to us in three dimension and coloured virtual reality. All we have to do is sit there and absorb it. We live in a technologically sophisticated world with our minds numbed to death by the very technology we have invented.

The people on the plain of Galilee's Mountain, had I think, seen these truths more clearly and received them with more excitement than we do today. To us they are boring old stories. To them they were the words of life.

48. What fruit may come *Luke 6: 43 - 45*

Luk 6:43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Luk 6:44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. Luk 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

This is a general observation made by Jesus. It is not telling us to do anything, not giving us a blessing if we meet certain considerations, but it is a reflection on life, and one we should think about.

Nature teaches us, and that from the beginning of the earth, that trees reproduce after their kind, just as the Bible says, *Gen 1:11 And God said, Let the earth sprout tender sprouts, the plant seeding seed, the fruit tree producing fruit according to its kind, whichever seed is in it on the earth. And it was so. Gen 1:12 And the earth bore tender sprouts, the plant seeding seed according to its kind, and the fruit tree producing fruit according to its kind, whichever seed is in it. And God saw that it was good.*

There is constancy in nature, genetic homeostasis, such that a thorn bush does not suddenly change and produce figs, or a bramble bush produce grapes. It is also a lesson to us about human nature. It says that the nature of a man produces the fruit of his heart, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”*. The mouth declares what is in the heart, it cannot do anything other than its nature allows it to do.

If only I had learned this wisdom when I was young, it would have saved me such heartache. If my parents could have understood it and in turn passed this on to me, I would have seen something revealing about men, something extraordinary. It would have been like a diagnostic tool for the human nature of a man, or a pair of x-ray spectacles to see into the soul, a tool to glimpse the true motivation of myself and others. Yes, I could have truly discerned others, but first and foremost I would have known myself.

The self-deception of man, is where satan grips him hard, and makes him think he is right in what he wants to perceive, *Gen 3:2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. Gen 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

Her heart did not say to satan, “God has warned us against eating the fruit, and I believe Him when He says we will die, so you get off my back, liar”. She almost appears apologetic, and says, of the forbidden fruit, *“but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die”*. She is merely reporting what she thinks God has said, and there is doubt in her voice. She is distancing herself from what God told her, because she is dialoguing with the devil, looking for another explanation. Jesus said “get behind me”, Eve says, “I want to hear what you’ve got to say” and satan says, predictably, “its alright, you will not die”.

Her moral compass did not line up with her desires. The moral compass pointed as it were to true North, her heart pointed due South, there was a conflict and her nature triumphed. The fall happened with the dialogue, before she ate the fruit, because she had determined to break God’s command and although hesitant, she gains confidence with the devils word, and the practical

commission of sin is accomplished. People hear what they want to hear as this anecdote from Spurgeon shows,

Have you never noticed that, when people come to ask you whether a thing is right or not, they usually mean to do it themselves? Frequently, a person comes to me; with some scruple of conscience; but the questioner has generally made up his mind what he is going to do before he receives my answer. More than one young person has said to me, Mr. Spurgeon, I want to ask your advice about a very important matter. You are my minister, and I want you to tell me whether you think I ought to marry So-and-so; but, whatever counsel I may give in such cases, I am quite certain they have; usually determined what they are going to do, so often I give no advice at all.

Possibly you remember the case of the minister who, on one occasion, was asked by a woman whether she should marry a certain man. Well, said he, the best thing you can do is to go out, and listen to the bells as you walk home. As she listened to their tuneful melody, they seemed to say to her "Make haste and get married, Make haste and get married". So she did, and her husband horsewhipped her three weeks afterwards. Then she went again to her minister, and told him that he had given her very bad advice. Why! said he, I never told you to get married; I told you to listen to the bells! So I did, replied the woman. But, said the minister, perhaps you did not hear their message aright; go and listen again. So she went out, and hearkened once more to the bells; remember, this was after the horsewhipping; and this is what they seemed to say then, "Never get married, Never get married."

Jesus would go on to show that sin is commissioned in the heart, before the physical commission, *Mat 15:17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? Mat 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. Mat 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: Mat 15:20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

Thinking about something that is wrong can soon lead to actions that do it, *2Sa 13:1 David's son Absalom had a beautiful unmarried sister named Tamar. Amnon, another of David's sons, fell in love with her. 2Sa 13:2 He was so much in love with her that he became sick, because it seemed impossible for him to have her; as a virgin, she was kept from meeting men.* You know the story. This spoilt, self-serving man, went on with the connivance of his servant, to corner poor Tamar, and rape her.

Sa 13:14 But he would not listen to her; and since he was stronger than she was, he overpowered her and raped her. 2Sa 13:15 Then Amnon was filled with a deep hatred for her; he hated her now even more than he had loved her before. He said to her, "Get out!" 2Sa 13:16 "No," she answered. "To send me away like this is a greater crime than what you just did!" But Amnon would not listen to her; 2Sa 13:17 he called in his personal servant and said, "Get this woman out of my sight! Throw her out and lock the door!" 2Sa 13:18 The servant put her out and locked the door. Tamar was wearing a long robe with full sleeves, the usual clothing for an unmarried princess in those days. 2Sa 13:19 She sprinkled ashes on her head, tore her robe, and with her face buried in her hands went away crying. GNB. Having done the deed, there is no remorse, only hatred for the girl. His heart had shown what he was like.

Is it possible for you to know what is in a man? It would be wonderful if you could see a man's heart and even your own heart, to know what going on inside of you. Jeremiah said the heart was incurable, but did he say it was unknowable? *Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is incurable; who can know it? Jer 17:10 I, Jehovah, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.*

The prophet does not say no one can know it, he says, "*who can know it?*" Certainly God can know it, "*I, Jehovah, search the heart*" and I think to a degree man can know it by following the Lord's guidance. I think that there is a way to see into a man's heart and to discern his motivations. "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*".

A man's words will betray his heart but what test could we set up, what could we ask a person to find out what he is like? I have thought about this and one question springs to mind, **Mat 22:42 What think ye of Christ?** This really looks into a man and I let the excellent Dr Gill explain it for us,

If this question was put to some persons, it would appear, that they have no thoughts of Christ at all. The atheist has none; as God is not in all his thoughts, nor in any of them, for all his thoughts are, that there is no God; so neither is Christ the Son of God. The deist thinks nothing of him, for he does not believe the revelation concerning him. The epicure, or voluptuous man, he thinks only of his carnal lusts and pleasures: and the worldling or covetous man, thinks nothing but of his worldly substance, and of the much good things he has laid up for many years: to say nothing of the Heathens, who have never heard of him; others, and such as bear the Christian name, have very wrong thoughts of Christ, mean, and undervaluing.

The Arrian thinks he is a created God, of a like, but not of the same nature with the Father. The Socinian thinks he is a God by office, and did not exist until he was born of the Virgin Mary; and has no notion of his sacrifice, and satisfaction for the sins of men. The Arminian thinks meanly of his righteousness, and denies the imputation of it to them that believe. And indeed, all such think wrongly of Christ, who divide their salvation between their works and him, and make them their Christ, or their frames their Christ, or their graces, and particularly their believing in him; that is, that ascribe that to them, which properly belongs to him. And as for those who do not bear the name Christians, it is no wonder that they entertain wrong and low thoughts of Christ.

The Jews thought him to be a mere man, and the carpenter's son. The Pharisees thought that he was an Antinomian, a libertine, a loose, and licentious person, that had no regard to the law, and good works: hence those words of his, "think not that I am come to destroy the law", Mat 5:17. Yea, they thought him to be a Samaritan, and to have a devil, and to cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The Mohammedans, though they allow him to be a prophet, yet think that he is inferior to Mahomet their prophet.

There are others that think well of Christ, admire the loveliness of his person, and the fullness of his grace, but are afraid Christ does not think well of them: they think well of the suitableness there is in Christ, of his righteousness to justify, of his blood to cleanse and pardon, and of the fullness of his grace to supply all wants, but think these are not for them: they often revolve in their minds his ability to save, and firmly believe it, but question his willingness to save them: they often think of Christ, what he is to others, but cannot think of him for themselves; only believers in Christ have a good thought of him, to their own joy and comfort: faith is a good thought of Christ; to them that believe, he is precious; and such, through believing in him, are filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; such think often, and well, of the dignity of Christ's person, of the excellency and usefulness of his offices, of the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, and of the sufficiency of his grace for them: they think well of what he did for them in eternity, as their surety, in the council and covenant of peace; and of what he has done for them in time, by suffering and dying for them in their room and stead; and of what he is now doing for them in heaven, as their advocate and intercessor.

Christ alone is the touchstone, the yardstick, the measure by which we judge each individual who walks this earth, as God will surely judge them, *Act 17:31 seeing that He has appointed a day on which, before long, He will judge the*

world in righteousness, through the instrumentality of a man whom He has pre-destined to this work, and has made the fact certain to every one by raising Him from the dead." Weymouth. Everyone has a duty to match up to Christ, *Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

You want to know what is in the heart of a man, then you ask him the question, **"What think ye of Christ?"** You want to know what sort of person they are, then you ask them how they relate to Christ, how they think of Him, how they serve Him, how their life relates to His life. In that simple question you will find the answers to what lurks beneath that exterior façade. You will detect the real person. You apply that question to people you know, girlfriends, boyfriends, business partners, social contacts, colleagues, family members, and the list goes on, and you will know exactly where they are, and what fruit they will produce, and where you stand in relation to them.

That is why I said, if only I had know about that when I was younger, I could have avoided the ship of fools, the idle companions, the wasters, and put my life on a better footing. Yet I was locked into their sin, and I was a thorn bush and a bramble, incapable of producing anything good, so why would I have bothered about discerning evil. I was as evil as those around me, and it made me comfortable.

The only way that I would change, from a thorn bush and a bramble bush, to a fruitful tree, was by an unnatural work, *"For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes"*. It does not happen in nature that you gather figs from a thorn bush. The silly men, the godless men, the men as Dr Gill describes them, "God is not in all his thoughts, nor in any of them, for all his thoughts are, that there is no God", the evolutionists, who believe that it is possible to create a new species by random chance, in short, that a bramble bush could become a grape vine in the course of time, just as Darwin supposed a bear could become a whale. They think God did not know what He was doing when He made things after their kind, the limitation of the species.

But this unnatural work, this change, is possible by God, and it is not evolution, it is a new creation, *2Co 5:17 So that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!* I am a new creation, I have a toolbox, if only I will use it, I can discern the face of natural man and look into his heart.

The writer of Hebrews put it this way, *Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is **a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.***

The prophet Jeremiah said, *Jer 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* Yes, most certainly they can, but this is a Divine work, a supernatural work of God.

Jesus sometimes questions us, to make us think, *Luk 6:43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.* It is like a wordless chorus, if you know what I mean, sounds of voices without structured meaning. They float over us, but if we tune into them, we hear a Voice which speaks wisdom to us.

49. The building site *Luke 6: 46 - 49*

Luk 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luk 6:47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: Luk 6:48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. Luk 6:49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

From last time, we travel as it were, from Horticulture to the Architecture, from the field to the building site. This is the last of Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount and I think his record of it is a cut down version of the Sermon but it has given us a taste of Jesus teaching.

This final section of the Sermon starts with a question, "*why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" It is like the man who came up and called Jesus "good Master", *Luk 18:18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Luk 18:19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.* To put it another way, Jesus could have said, "Why do you call yourself a Christian when you are nothing like me".

People love a show of religion and how to be pious, and they observe all the outward conventions of religion, but the inward matters of Jesus are left fluttering in the breeze, and they do not what He says.

Jesus uses the analogy of a buildings foundation to describe how we should build our lives. It is so obvious that it should not need saying, but were you ever taught that a good foundation was necessary for a good life? I do not mean a "good" education, or mixing with the right people, or being well mannered. What

I am talking of is a life built upon Jesus' words and the actions that must follow those words, that is the foundation that I am talking about.

If a man's life is not built on the foundation of Jesus and His words, he will find himself in a world that will fall in on itself when troubles arise, particularly at the end of time, when a man comes to the place of answering for his sins. The world that man has lived in, was an imaginary place, with no room for God, no meaning in life, no absolute rules, just like the days when Israel had no king, *Jdg 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* It is all right when there is no trouble to disturb you, but what do you do when things go wrong. You are unable to find any guidance because you are all doing something different, you are all doing what is right for you, but it will not be right for someone else. You are coming from different places, you have different foundations. You will be adrift on the meaningless sea of your eternity.

It is best to start young. I have noticed that when people have spent too much time in the world, they become cynical, hardened and less open to the Gospel, which is why its best to start young, *Ecc 12:1 So remember your Creator while you are still young, before those dismal days and years come when you will say, "I don't enjoy life."* GNB. I remember, years ago, talking to an old soldier from the Black Watch regiment. He had lost his leg but had survived the Boer war. I asked him what he thought of life, having attained his 90 or so years. All he could say, when I spoke of Christ was, "you can't believe anything nowadays". What a sad testimony to a life lived without Christ, ending in utter confusion, not believing anything, and how true are Jesus words, *Luk 6:49 But anyone who hears what I say and doesn't obey me is like someone whose house wasn't built on solid rock. As soon as the river rushed against that house, it was smashed to pieces!* It left utter confusion.

I was listening to a debate on Creation versus evolution the other night. It was between John Lennox and Peter Atkins, both professors of Oxford University, but John Lennox is a Christian and Peter Atkins is not. I am of course prejudiced and so I will not go into the material of the debate which to me favoured Lennox. As they spoke though, I saw two men who had made their minds up about which side they were on. I am not sure who the debate was aimed at, for it certainly was not for the protagonists benefit, they had already cemented their positions. It really was no point in debating, but it showed the truth of our Lords saying about foundations and you could see who was building, or had built what.

There is something else about debating the existence of God. I think it is very arrogant, particularly as the prime party being questioned, God, chooses to be absent from the debate. The debate, I saw, was completely useless. Why? *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually*

discerned. The man rejecting God did so, because his nature considered it foolish. He was a fool and he could not see because he was a blind fool.

The Christian was equally to blame because he only sees and knows in part, *1Co 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 1Co 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

You cannot debate with an unbeliever, period, it is impossible. It is impossible, because they are blind, and they are deaf and dumb. They are in a different world, a world which somehow gets order from disorder without the agency of God. They leave a big part of the debate out, they cannot acknowledge God. They will not listen because they cannot hear and therefore it is pointless debating them. *1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1Co 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 1Co 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** 1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

It is a marvellous universe we live in. Some people think they understand it, and they give wonderful pronouncements on it. They say it came out of a big bang, and from a singularity, a nothing point, and the whole universe emerged, all that material from nothing. What? You may consider it true, it may be the ravings of a lunatic, but there is no way you can prove it. Then life itself emerged from no life, an act of faith by the evolutionist, an act of God say the Christians, but there is no way you can prove it. But listen to this, which you can understand, the words of Jesus, *Luk 6:47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:*

Jesus came not to rescue us from intellectual conundrums about the universe, but to set us on a solid foundation. It does not matter if you find the universe difficult to understand, Jesus never told you to understand it, I don't and anyone who says he does is deceived. Here is hope for all of a non-scientific bent, here the child as well as the old can achieve this, the non-technical or the technical, you do not have to think very hard about it, it does not require vast intellect, all it requires is that we are obedient to Him.

It further says that the person building a foundation, "digged deep", and built on a rock. He did not just scrape a bit away, he went on through the layers until he had found bed rock. It is a stronger foundation because it is tied into the structure of the earth, not in the shifting levels laid upon the top of the earth. It is not about the building, it is about the foundation. Its about finding it, finding the rock.

How deep should you go? The answer is simple, as far as Jesus word directs you. If you want really good foundations, you will go through all His words and not just some of His words, and you will spend your life making certain sure that you have not neglected any words. You will not be in a hurry to build until the foundations are right. You will not rush off to tell others to build on a poor foundation until you yourself have found the true foundation. *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

The modern church is full of advice about your life, how to prosper, what God supposedly wants from you, how church should be done, but in their rush to get you into their box, they fail to tell you of this fundamental teaching, *Luk 6:47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:* Well preacher, spend some time on showing me what its like when I do not build on solid foundation, when I neglect the words of Jesus, which are so important to my life.

How many teachers and leaders in the church have not done this for themselves? They rush off at the earliest opportunity, thinking they are God's own gift to the church yet they have not even grasped the fundamentals of Jesus. The more I go on in the faith, the more I see it is all about Jesus, and the more I am inclined to listen to an elderly saint than a polished young speaker, *Pro 16:31 The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.* The good news is only good, when it has got a solid foundation.

Whatever I am building in my Christian life is made safe and sure, because of the foundation of Jesus words. It does not matter what anyone says, whatever the scientists say, whatever the politicians say, whatever anyone says, when it contradicts the pure words of Jesus, Jesus words have precedence over all. Some of His words may seem to conflict with science, *Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Is it possibly true? Jesus says it is so and that is enough. He created the worlds, *Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.* Did it really happen like that? Jesus says so and that is enough. His words are true even if we have difficulty understanding them, and it is us who are wrong and not Him.

I should trust to Him, whatever the worlds understanding, whatever my understanding. He is the light to lighten the Gentiles, He created physical light and He created spiritual light. He is the lampstand and lights in the Holy place, lest we should walk in darkness. I should hold His hand and never let go, I should look into His eyes and ask Him what I should do, I must trust in Him. There will be no one else with me when I go through the gates of death.

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” I suppose He is saying do you really trust me. Do you really trust every word that I say? Do you think that you will trust me over all else or will you compromise and betray me. Many people call themselves followers of Christ, but they do not do what He says neither do they believe what He says, they take His words and manipulate them.

This is one example of Jesus sayings that most people who call themselves Christians will not do, *Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

Jesus said that. He said that if you had a dispute with someone, you had to tell them to their face, first of all. He didn't say that you moan to somebody else, or you get somebody else to tell them, or you call the church to do something. It said that if you have a problem you deal with it. That was to stop people making unwarranted disputes because they had to substantiate the matter. Its not hard to do, especially if you approach the matter with love, and more importantly it shows that you heard Christ's words.

That is one of the ways that we disobey Him. It is one of the ways that we build a house to God without that part of the foundation. When we do not forgive, that part of the foundation is missing also. When I judge unfairly and condemn others in the thing that I do, when I do not forgive those that despitely use me, when I have anger towards men, when I lust, when I commit adultery, when I refuse to turn the other cheek, all these things degrade the foundation of my life.

The test of that degrading of the foundations through disobedience to Christ's words, comes with the storms of life, the things that get thrown at you. When you try to build a house of Christ on those partial foundations it will crumble before your eyes. It is a house of sham and lies. When you are trying to tell people of Christ, they will see through you. They will pick up on those faults, the gaps in the foundations and say, “well you don't do these things”.

Make sure the ideal that you hold in your mind matches the reality of what you have actually built. Don't see your life through rose tinted spectacles. There is nothing worse than being deceived, like the king who thought he had a fine garment until a little boy told him he was naked. The words of Jesus that we fail to hear are more important than the words that we hear, because the words we fail to hear will cause our downfall.

There is I think hope for us. If we have not built a foundation on Christ's words, there is still time to correct our mistakes. We can rip it all out and start again. We can make sure we have dug down to the rock, we can build carefully, we can listen to what Jesus says and do it.

Don't get stuck in a rut of man's making, a denomination which leads to your neglecting some of Christ words. It is your responsibility and those people who have been responsible for you will not be around when judgement comes. They will be too busy answering for themselves.

50. The Gentile with more faith than Israel *Luke 7:* *1 - 10*

Luk 7:1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. Luk 7:2 And a certain Centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. Luk 7:3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. Luk 7:4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: Luk 7:5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Luk 7:6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Luk 7:7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. Luk 7:8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. Luk 7:9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Luk 7:10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

The story is about a Centurion, a captain of about 100 men, who beseeches Jesus to spare his servant's life. His simple plea is based upon his understanding of an ordered universe, a universe with meaning that understands when it is spoken to appropriately, a universe with an order which he recognises and appeals to. He is used to giving orders that are obeyed and so he appeals to Jesus as one who he recognises has even greater authority.

I think the noble Centurion is a wonderful example to us of a man who looks too much on this life, and not unfortunately at the spiritual life. Maybe that will change as a result of this healing. Perhaps he didn't fully grasp the reason Jesus came, perhaps his view of eternal life was like the hope of the Roman gladiator (Film 2000), who when he died in battle thought he would awake in Elysium. In Greek and Roman mythology, Elysium was the place of rest for the dead who were blessed by the gods. It was also known as the Elysian Fields or the Elysian Plain. Originally only heroes whom the gods had made immortal went to Elysium. Eventually, it became the destination of anyone who had lived a righteous life.

The Centurion's view of the universe is one which we do not really see. His view is one in which "faith", or belief, is a prime mover of events. *Luk 17:5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. Luk 17:6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.*

I have often thought how nice it would be to remove that gigantic tree that blots my sunlight in the garden at about 3.00 pm, and I have thought of our Lord's words frequently, in respect of this tree. I had often thought also that there is no one who has any faith, because if it were true, things would be uprooted everywhere and thrown in the sea, as they tested their faith. I have also considered this test of faith, "*be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea*" as a rather trite example of faith and that a more worthy example could be found. I suppose the Centurion is one such example.

Perhaps though, our Lord is talking about how much faith you need to do something. If you want to shift a tree, then a small amount of faith is needed, a mustard seed being analogous to the amount required. You need a much smaller amount to do less impressive things, much smaller than a mustard seed, much smaller than a grain of salt. Its all down to what you are trying to do with faith.

Faith is the language of the universe. If you can speak "faith", then the universe hears, understands, and does as it is told to do, "*If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you*". You may make the slightest whisper in "faith", silent as falls the mustard seed, and at once the ears of the universe prick up, and faithful to the word, like a beloved dog, the universe obeys his master's voice.

The Lord spoke the language of DNA when He addressed the fever, *Luk 4:38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. Luk 4:39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and*

immediately she arose and ministered unto them. He spoke to everything in its own language.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus is called The Word? *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and **without him was not any thing made that was made**.....Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth..... 1Jn 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the **Word of life**;*

He speaks and it comes into being. This universe started with the Word, a person. The cause of all life which proceeds from Him and without Him, without His agency, there could exist nothing. Everything He does in the days of His humanity is accomplished by a word. He shows by speaking that which we cannot see. He did not heal by doing complex operations, He did not have a complicated routine, He did not do it by any specific incantation and procedure, He just spoke and it was done. When He used something like mud or spit, it was symbolic, but He healed by the Word. There we can see Jesus as the Word become flesh and it is a glimpse of the wonderful.

The evolutionist parts company with us here, because in their blinkered world, they can only make out cause and effect, and that is according to their materialist view of the universe it. Though, how atoms, which know nothing can become sentient creatures, a man, which can explore his universe, he cannot say, and so he resorts to a fairy tale, once upon a time there was nothing and then in 240 zeptoseconds everything existed. Scientists have measured the shortest unit of time ever: the time it takes a light particle to cross a hydrogen molecule. That time, for the record, is 247 zeptoseconds. A zeptosecond is a trillionth of a billionth of a second, or a decimal point followed by 20 zeroes and a 1.

We see in the actions of Christ, a world of meaning, a universe that can communicate with us, a structured and formed creation, a hierarchy of order, which we just have to understand or else we cannot use it. It does not stand lifeless, and it is not like our Creator to make such a place with no speech, dumb and void, for, *Psa 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Psa 19:2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. Psa 19:3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Psa 19:4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Psa 19:5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a*

strong man to run a race. Psa 19:6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

There is a language that speaks of the Glories of God, *Rom 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

There is also a form of communication which causes them to move, to become displaced, *"If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you".* It is not given to us to know how it is done but it is true because it is the words of Christ, and the Centurion understood this much.

Luk 7:6 So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the officer sent friends to tell him, "Sir, don't trouble yourself. I do not deserve to have you come into my house, Luk 7:7 neither do I consider myself worthy to come to you in person. Just give the order, and my servant will get well. Luk 7:8 I, too, am a man placed under the authority of superior officers, and I have soldiers under me. I order this one, 'Go!' and he goes; I order that one, 'Come!' and he comes; and I order my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." . GNB.

The healing of the Centurion's servant, this is healing at a distance. Remote healing, just think of that, whatever is wrong with you could be completely cured without you even leaving home and going to a hospital and seeing a surgeon. No touching the sick person, not even the seeing of the sick person, no diagnosis of the patient. In this world of all the sick and suffering, in all the places of the dying, despairing and sick, Jesus, without seeing the person heals him and only him. It is a wonderful thing, but Jesus brings the circumstances about to show this great truth. His unbounded authority but His bounded obedience to the Father, in that He does not heal indiscriminately or universally.

The Centurion was schooled in discipline, drilled in it, and his men likewise are drilled in it. It becomes second nature to them, to obey an order without question. It was called the Sacramentum (military), the oath of allegiance, sworn on attestation by a Roman recruit and it was the most strictly observed of all Roman oaths. Its content stressed obedience to the consuls or commanding officers and to good discipline. From the time of Augustus Caesar, loyalty was sworn to the Emperor, before the standards and the oath was renewed annually on New Year's Day or the anniversary of the Emperor's accession. You can see that obedience was no small matter to this man. So when the Centurion said to one of his subordinates, "jump", it was "how high should we jump, sir?" He knows authority, he expects obedience, and he sees in Jesus the same spirit, demanding obedience and getting it.

How did the Centurion come to that conclusion? Not spontaneously, surely. He did not come out that morning and say, "This Jesus, about whom I know absolutely nothing, He would be a good person to go and see?" No, the Centurion had been watching Jesus like a hawk. Why? It was part of his remit to keep order, that is why he is stationed there and the sedition in the Galilee region made it a prime location to keep an eye on. There had been revolts in Sepphoris, near Nazareth, about 20 miles from Capernaum, and this bastion of Judaism needed keeping an eye on. His men were also tasked with keeping track of people as well as watching each other's backs in this rebellious region. It would not take long for this Jesus to come to their attention and with His rapid rise in popularity, He needed watching.

I imagine that as a person of interest, Jesus attracted Rome's attention. Probably in some disguise or other, the Centurion and his men went along to hear what Jesus said. He would have seemed to the people watching Him, more anti the Jewish leaders than anti the Roman leaders. He talked of a Kingdom, but it wasn't on earth. He healed people of all classes and was partial to no man. He really was an enigma. But most of all it was the healing which fascinated the Centurion.

The Centurion had seen something, not just the healing, it was the way that Jesus conducted Himself. Not like these "healers", the tele-evangelists, the showmen, the great fakers, who like the prophets of Baal think they shall be heard for the noise they make, *1Ki 18:27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 1Ki 18:28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 1Ki 18:29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*

Jesus did the healing with authority, and you may have missed it, if you were not paying attention in the crowd as it was almost incidental to what He was saying. He is authoritative, He says it once and it is immediately obeyed. The Centurion must have thought, this is just like me telling someone to do something, I just get on with what I am doing and what I say gets done. He sees nature subordinate to Christ. The Centurion made the link which many fail to do, that nature is subject to laws which can be put into language and that there was a hierarchy which Jesus controlled.

It takes a lot to "amaze" God, *Luk 7:9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

No Jew in Israel had exhibited the faith of this man. He was unique. The Pharisees must have been aghast that Jesus uses Roman discipline as an example of the Kingdom, even though the people liked the Roman because he had done good things to them, but this event had probably set him at a distance from them, for he was now a supporter of the Nazarene.

One more point, it does not say that the servant was forgiven, not that he was in a state to ask anything. Nor does it say the Centurion was forgiven. Forgiveness of sin is left out of these lives as far as the Bible is concerned. It may be that they were, like so many people only interested in the “now”, and eternity seemed a long way away. You hear today of people praying for someone to be healed but never that they might be truly saved, forgiven. It is like the returning evangelists, who were more concerned with demons being subject to them, than the fact that their names were in the lamb’s book of life, *Luk 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

I do hope that the Centurion came to know Jesus as Lord and that we shall meet him in heaven. Who knows, he might have been the Centurion at the cross, or was that another Centurion, and again different from the Centurion Cornelius in Acts? It is good to know that in a world of disobedience some men saw the importance of discipline and that proceeds from an ordered Creation and a Creator.

51. The widow of Nain *Luke 7: 11 - 17*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_4LpZgm2nw *Luk 7:11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Luk 7:12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. Luk 7:13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. Luk 7:14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. Luk 7:15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. Luk 7:16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. Luk 7:17 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.*

This is a very intriguing story which has its roots in the time of the kings of Israel, and more specifically in the time of two famous prophets Elijah and Elisha. Luke’s audience would need to search the ancient scrolls to find this history, but it is

well worth the effort. It will also show how deficient we are in studying the OT. For many Christians, the OT is like “junk DNA”, something left over from the past, something used in the structure of the NT, and now no longer relevant. The result is that they hardly ever go to the OT for spiritual nourishment. It is all relevant as we shall see.

First let us describe the village of Nain. Nain was a small farming village at Jesus's time, nestled up against Mount Moreh, which defined the east side of the Jezreel Valley. It is located approximately four miles from Mount Tabor and twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum. The ancient town perhaps stood somewhat higher on the hill than the present village. In the rocks to the East are many tombs of antiquity. The site commands a beautiful and extensive view across the plain to Carmel, over the Nazareth hills, and away past Tabor to where the white peak of Hermon glistens in the sun. To the South are the heights of Gilboa and the uplands of Samaria.



Figure 1 The main street of Nain

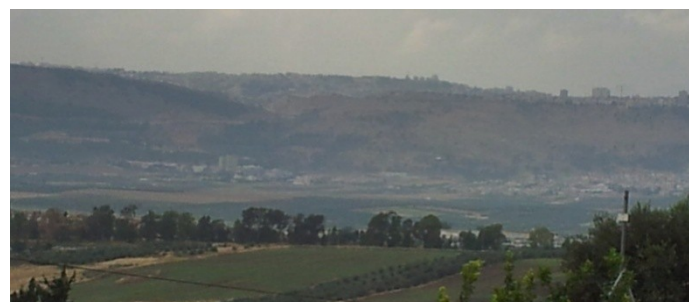


Figure 2 Nain looking across to the Nazareth Ridge

The village, once prosperous, has fallen on evil days. It is said that the villagers received such good prices for a crop known as Simsim. Simsim is a flowering plant which is cultivated for its edible seeds, which grow in pods. It has one of the highest oil contents of any seed. Simsim seed is considered to be the oldest oilseed crop known to man, domesticated well over 5000 years ago. Simsim is very drought-tolerant plant with an ability to grow where most Crops fail and ranks second in importance to groundnuts. At Nain they cultivated it on a large scale. A sudden drop in the price brought them to ruin, from which, after many years, they have not recovered. It remains today a tiny settlement. The word Nain means “beauty” or “pleasantness.” In Hebrew, Nain referred to green pastures or loveliness.

The Bible records the healing of a widow's only son by Elijah, although this was in the town Zarephath in Sidon. Elijah had been living at the widow's house for some time when the son fell sick and died which prompted Elijah to cry out in despair,



1Ki 17:20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 1Ki 17:21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 1Ki 17:22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 1Ki 17:23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. 1Ki 17:24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

There is another miracle, almost exactly the same done by Elijah's successor. One day Elisha is passing through Shunem, that's just a few steps around Mt. Moriah, next door to Nain, when he is invited in to a wealthy woman's house for dinner. He lodges there and in recognition of the woman's kindness offers to do a favour for her. She is desperate for a child and the prophet duly obliges her with an answer to her prayer and she is given a child. The child grows up, but one fateful day is struck down with a pain in the head, possibly a brain tumour, and he is carried in from the field and dies.

I take the story up in the text, 2Ki 4:28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me? 2Ki 4:29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. 2Ki 4:30 And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her. 2Ki 4:31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. 2Ki 4:32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 2Ki 4:33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. 2Ki 4:34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 2Ki 4:35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 2Ki 4:36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. 2Ki 4:37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Now fast forward 850 years, and in virtually the same location, there is another widow's son who has died. This is the first of three miracles of Jesus in the canonical gospels, in which he raises the dead, the other two being the raising of Jairus' daughter and of Lazarus. The road passing the gates of Nain, where Jesus

just “happened” to be going, on the day after He had healed the Centurion’s servant, and He finds the widow woman on the way to her son’s funeral. Was this just coincidence or Divine providence?

While Jesus was in Capernaum teaching and healing the Centurion’s servant the previous day, this poor woman was witnessing the last moments of her son’s life. As his life drained away from him, so her despair and sobbing mounted. She must have spent a lonely night in grief with the body, with only the prospect of a burial to compound her grief. I hope that her faith in the Lord gave her some comfort. God puts people through trials with only the future hope of a better day dawning, but unknown to her, it was coming sooner than she expected, and salvation was on its way to her house.

The young man, was her only son, and the term used is μονογενής = monogenēs = only begotten and it is used 9 times in scripture, in 5 of the cases it refers to Christ, *Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* It is used of pre-eminence.

The event reminded me of the scripture which says of another woman, *Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.* That woman had her son taken from her, and it would seem that the only way you get to God is by passing through death. Who is the woman of Revelation chapter 12? The catholics say Mary the mother of Jesus, *Rev 12:1 And there appeared a great **wonder in heaven**; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:* Mary is often shown by this image of a woman with a crown of 12 stars, but we see this starts “in heaven”, and Mary was not in heaven for the birth of her son.



I would suggest the “woman” in Revelation 12 is typical of the “church” or “Israel”. The longed for Messiah comes from this source, out of Israel, and He is taken up to God and His throne, at the Crucifixion. He is raised from the dead and comes to judge the living and the dead. The woman at Nain, the widow and her son, are also types and shadows of the Cross. The woman of Elijah and Elisha’s time are also shadows of the Cross. Such a momentous event as the Crucifixion, the death of Christ, the death of death in the death of Christ, as John Owen put it, must needs be branded into history, and what better way of showing it, than these types.

Israel for many a long year had mourned for a saviour, *Zec 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of*

grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. Zec 12:11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. Hadadrimmon is in the same area as the events we are looking at, and is linked by suffering to Jerusalem. Now the Messiah was come, but not how many expected Him.

We must not forget that Jesus sees His own death in these events, but He also sees the triumphant resurrection. He spoke to the widow, “weep not” and touched the coffin, not the man, and says to him that is dead, whose ears should not hear, “young man, I say to you arise”. Now he that was dead did something which we miss, he got up and spoke. But what did he talk about? We can only speculate.

The resurrection is a crucial part of a man’s salvation. *Rom 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; Rom 4:24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

It is not the death which saves a man, that death might bare the punishment, but anybody could die and you wouldn’t know one way or another if what he was saying was true. But if He was raised from the dead, that would be something, that would make His words true, because God would not raise a liar. So the raising of a dead man by the power of Christ shows us also that God put His seal on Him and that Jesus was the genuine article.

Now I would have expected Jesus to have given a few words, a homily, to explain what He was doing and why He did it, an explanation of the miracle and how it all ties in with His mission. But there is not a word. The first great miracle of resurrection and it is left without comment. Perhaps it showed enough on its own, without words accompanying it, but it is the first time there is no comment with a miracle.

When Jesus raises Lazarus, He shows them that He is the life, *Joh 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: Joh 11:26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?* When He raises Jairus’ daughter, He encourages faith to make her well, *Luk 8:50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. Luk 8:51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.* But here, with the widow, there is no great teaching, *Luk 7:13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. Luk 7:14 And he came*

and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

It is as if He does the miracle for Himself (I say that with reverence), and why not. It was setting forth that great miracle of His resurrection, and the coming day when all the dead would be raised, the terminus of the universe. That small event at Nain was a giant leap for faith. It was significant to Paul, *1Co 15:12 If we preach that Christ was raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life? 1Co 15:13 If they won't be raised to life, Christ himself wasn't raised to life. 1Co 15:14 And if Christ wasn't raised to life, our message is worthless, and so is your faith. 1Co 15:15 If the dead won't be raised to life, we have told lies about God by saying that he raised Christ to life, when he really did not. 1Co 15:16 So if the dead won't be raised to life, Christ wasn't raised to life. 1Co 15:17 Unless Christ was raised to life, your faith is useless, and you are still living in your sins. 1Co 15:18 And those people who died after putting their faith in him are completely lost. 1Co 15:19 If our hope in Christ is good only for this life, we are worse off than anyone else. 1Co 15:20 **But Christ has been raised to life! And he makes us certain that others will also be raised to life.** CEV.*

The resurrection is the practical basis of our faith, according to Paul. No resurrection, no faith. No worthwhile message, a teaching of lies, and you are in you sins, and we are completely lost. I do not want to mislead you, so if you do not believe in the general resurrection, there is no point in listening to these ministries. I do not want you to have a moral Gospel, a moral Christianity. That is no different to the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection, yet continue with morality. It is pointless, and I part company with those people as Paul did, *Act 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Act 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. Act 17:33 So Paul departed from among them.*

No, the resurrection is critical for understanding our faith, and the widow of Nain's son is written for our faith.

It had the desired effect, *Luk 7:16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. Luk 7:17 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.*

The word "rumour" is in fact logos or word. This word went out from this event, not mentioned in the other Gospels, namely, "**That a great prophet is risen**

up among us; and, That God hath visited his people". A prophet like Elijah and Elisha. No wonder they were afraid.

52. John did no miracle *Luke 7: 18 - 21*

Luk 7:18 And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. Luk 7:19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? Luk 7:20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? Luk 7:21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

John and Jesus preach the same message, and both are effective in what they preach but John did not do miracles, *Joh 10:39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, Joh 10:40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. Joh 10:41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. Joh 10:42 And many believed on him there.*

John the Baptist didn't do miracles but he was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, *Luk 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* That is also saying that he was greater than Moses, and greater than Elijah, but he could not yet attain to the glory that would come to the least in the Kingdom of God. That was because a line was drawn between the two covenants, and for all the glory of the first covenant, it did not come anywhere near the glory of the New Covenant.

If then, John preached with such success, and without miracles, why did Jesus need miracles? What were the miracles for? We are so self-absorbed, so selfish, that we see the miraculous as only for ourselves, whether it is to establish us in a ministry or benefit us by helping us along our path. We seek healing for our own benefit, wealth for our own comfort, and that the miraculous would intervene to give us long and happy lives. John lived a harsh life, was penniless, suffered in prison, died a cruel death and did not one miracle, and as far as scripture is concerned, asked for no miracles.

Were miracles for the benefit of mankind? The Old Testament records about fifty miracles besides the Genesis account of creation. God did these, either for the punishment of wicked men or nations, or on behalf of His people in times of

stress or danger. Healing the sick was not usually among them, with perhaps the exception of the arm of Jeroboam, *1Ki 13:6 And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before.* The prophet undid the first judgement upon Jeroboam and in fact healings were the “undoing” of the effects of judgement, as when the people were bitten by snakes. People were killed by God's power, others were stricken in various ways, and some raised from the dead, but healings were scarce. **In the OT it was Jehovah, God as He appeared then, who did the miracles.**

So however you might like to enhance evangelism by a healing ministry, a man called of God, can do preaching just as well without a single miracle. Preaching the word, carries as much weight of purpose without miracles, *Isa 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa 55:10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: Isa 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but **it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*** It is God's Sovereign word the evangelist speaks, not man's word, and we should not forget it.

So what do miracles add to a person's ministry? Authentication of the speaker, not really, John did no miracles and the people believed him? But Jesus is more than a man, more than divine, He is God, Jehovah of the OT, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, *Joh 14:8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Joh 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Joh 14:10 Believest thou not that **I am in the Father, and the Father in me?** the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but **the Father that dwelleth in me,** he doeth the works. Joh 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Joh 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

When Jesus implies that He is God, “**I am in the Father, and the Father in me**”, that comment needs explanation. Does it mean He is a lesser God, that the Father is doing the works and He is just a vessel bearing God? By no means. Look at the miracle that Jesus has just done. When He raised the widow's of Nain's son, He said, “*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.*” He does not say, “in the Name of the Father I say to you rise”, He says, “**I say** unto thee, Arise.” Jesus is acting in His own Name. Jesus is God incarnate, as John says, *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh*

*1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.....Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. **Jehovah of the OT is Jesus of the NT.***

*Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. He showed it in His life, that God really was there, Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: Php 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: Php 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Php 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: as the hymn writers Wesley and Whitfield said*
Christ, by the highest Heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord:
Late in the time behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, **Hail th'incarnate Deity!***
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Don't just skim past this section, it is an important issue. Do you have to be reminded that Jesus is God because you see Him as a man? We see Him as a baby at Bethlehem and we keep Him in that human form because it suits us to do so. Do you only sometimes see Him as God? He is God and Lord and this generation has lost something of the respect for the awe and majesty of Jesus/God, by familiarity with the "man" Jesus, and we keep Him from becoming anything else.

We may start off seeing Him as Jesus, the approachable God, we see Him from that distant ignorance, but as we get to know Him, things should change. We grow up, and our perspective changes, *1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1Co 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* With that change into manhood, surely, there must come a change in our perspective. When I became a man, I did not see the same as a child, and if I did see as a child there is something wrong with me.

Now as a grown man, I see Jesus as more than a man, like Thomas, *Joh 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.* We should show Jesus the respect He deserves as God.

The miracles of Jesus, in His own Name, show that He is God in the NT, and I think that this is the reason for Jesus miracles, it is recapitulating the OT. But what you say, are the miracles following His ministry, post-resurrection about?

*Joh 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; **and greater works than these shall he do**; because I go unto my Father.*

Can I and you, really do greater works than Jesus, greater works than God? Let us examine that statement. We have 2000 years to show the practicality of Christianity, 2000 years in which we can see the truth of this statement, and so we must ask, has it happened, is there one person in the world who has done greater works than Jesus? No, there has not, no one has done anything of the order and magnitude of Christ. Well, it might not have happened yet, a delay in its fulfilment, waiting for another age when this would come to pass. But nothing was said about another age, and so I reject that.

Perhaps it has happened and we did not hear about it. But then, if the “greater works” were done in secret, the whole Gospel is not universal, it is a secret gospel, and that is a denial of Christ’s mission to preach to the ends of the world, *Mar 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*

They certainly had signs, and they certainly did miracles, but did they do “greater works”? Jesus said they would, so what does “greater works” mean? It does not mean miracles and healings, these were done by the apostles, to a lesser degree perhaps, but they were done. Even the devil will do deceptive miracles, *2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

What was the ministry of Jesus? It was to save His people, *Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.* We should not look to a change in plan, a change in mission parameters, just to satisfy our desire to show off the powers of God, that we can be seen doing “greater works”. He came for His people, He showed He was God, He was Jehovah, by the miracles He did, He died and rose again, and He reiterates the words that accompany His birth, which I paraphrase, “I save my people”. The disciples would carry that message to the world, *Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.***

The “greater works” I take, not to be more in number, not more miraculous but more extensive. To cover a much larger region, in fact, the whole earth. Paul’s extensive labours show that he covered a much larger area than Jesus, from Israel to Rome, thousands of miles, and thousands of converts. It came at a great price to the evangelists who nearly all lost their lives. What a difference between today’s money obsessed TV evangelists, whose greatest fear is that their wig might slip off or that they break a fingernail.

The disciples of John had never seen Jesus and His miracles, so John sent two of them over to Him to see for themselves, *Luk 7:20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? Luk 7:21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.*

It was very obvious to the disciples that He was “the one that should come” by the things that He did. This event is not showing that John doubted his cousin, but that he is proclaiming Him to his disciples. I don’t think that John had forgotten that amazing event, when God had spoken from heaven, *Mat 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, **This is my beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased.* No, John did not doubt Jesus, but perhaps these disciples do. They probably came to John and said to him, is this Jesus, that you speak of the son of God, and John said, you go and see for yourselves, you go and ask Him, “*Are you he that should come? or look we for another?*”.

This event is important, because it could have resulted in two groups, two factions that never united over the person of The Messiah. There would have been the OT Baptists, still expecting their Messiah, and there would have been the NT Baptists representing Jesus. This event draws the two sides together at a critical time and cements the two firmly together. The disciples of John had not run in vain, for here is the One, here is God.

53. What did you expect to see? Luke 7: 24 - 30

Luk 7:24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? Luk 7:25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. Luk 7:26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. Luk 7:27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Luk 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he. Luk 7:29 And all the people

that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. Luk 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. .

This takes up from where we left off with John's disciples. After the disciples leave, Jesus turns to the people who must have been listening to what was being said and to dispel any doubts that they may have had about John, He asks them, "What did they expect of such a man" and shows them just who John was. Jesus gives a glowing CV of this man, the sort of praise that would have had John blushing with pride. It makes you wonder, will we get anything like that or will we barely get an acknowledgement? When God holds our hearts in His hands, and takes a long look at our lives, what will He find of value in us? What is there of Him to find?

When John came to the river Jordan to preach, what did the people expect, *Luk 3:15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;* John must have been what we call charismatic. Charisma is the quality of being able to attract, charm and influence those around you. It is usually easy to identify when someone is charismatic but it is harder to say what the qualities are.

John spoke to the crowds who sought him, he was confident in his message, he could rapport with different people of different rank that wanted to see him, a lone figure but far from lonely. I would think he was also an extrovert, the sort of person who would grab the attention in a crowd of people. But he must have been disciplined to await his time, as a solitary life does not sit well with so great a mission.

He may have dressed like a wild man, but do not let the clothes fool you, that was only the costume of Elijah. He was cultured not uncouth or ignorant, for he had a perfect grasp of scriptures and the signs of the times, but where did he get it from? It says very little in scripture about his life except that, *Luk 1:80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.* It is just speculation, but there are some fascinating similarities between John and the Qumran Covenanters, who might hold the key to what John did in those intervening years. This article on Qumran is taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica,

"Qumrān, also spelled Kumran, is a region on the north-western shore of the Dead Sea, notable since 1947 as the site of the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were first



discovered. The best-preserved documents at that site are those found in Cave 1, including an Isaiah Scroll; the Rule of the Community (also called the Manual of Discipline); The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness, or War Scroll; a scroll of thanksgiving hymns; and a commentary on Habakkuk. Cave 2 contained only fragments, but Cave 3 yielded the Copper Scroll, a list of Temple treasures and their hiding places. Cave 4 sheltered the main deposit of what some believe to have been an Essene library, which contained approximately 400 manuscripts, generally in poor condition. Most of the manuscripts are sectarian writings, and about 100 of them are biblical texts, covering the entire Hebrew Bible except Esther. Several well-preserved documents were recovered from Cave 11, including a large scroll with canonical, apocryphal, and unknown psalms. There was also a copy of Leviticus (dated to the 3rd century BC) as well as the very important Temple Scroll. Its 66 preserved columns give details for the construction of the ideal Temple of Jerusalem.”

Excavations (since 1949) at a site called Khirbet Qumrān (Arabic: “Qumrān Ruins”), less than a mile from the sea and north of the waterway Wadi Qumrān, have revealed the ruins of buildings, believed by some scholars to have been occupied by a community of Essenes, who have been posited as the owners of the Scrolls. The following description of the Qumran community is from P R Davies,

“There are striking similarities between the teachings and lifestyle of John the Baptist and those of the Qumranites. John may have been raised or formed in the community and then left to pursue ministry to a wider audience. The Dead Sea Scrolls help us to see that John the Baptist, as described in the Gospels, fits well into the historical reality of first-century Judaism in the land of Israel”.

There are a few striking facts that point to John’s connection to the Essenes. The whole community may have originated during the time of the Maccabees when the Hasmoneans assumed control of the high priesthood. The Scrolls name the founder of the Essenes as, the “Teacher of Righteousness,” who appears to have descended from the legitimate line of high priests, descendants of Zadok. Regardless, many of the members of Qumran, who led a monastic life there, were recruited from priestly families, even while they were still young. We know that John the Baptist came from such a family, descending from the first high priest Aaron, and the Essene practice would make sense of the words that “the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Luke 1:80).

There is another odd detail about John that Qumran might explain, “his food was locusts and wild honey” (Matthew 3:4). Bergsma describes

how “the oaths of membership to the covenant community of Qumran included a commitment never again to partake of food prepared outside the community. But a loophole to this vow was edible aspects of the environment that weren’t prepared by anyone, and perhaps didn’t qualify as ‘food’ according to their oath”. The Jewish historian Josephus speaks of expelled members wandering in the desert eating grass and we have records of one particular expelled member, Banus, who disciplesd Josephus, who also wore clothing found in the desert. Bergsma speculates that John may have been expelled by Qumran for his views on the coming Messiah and the role he would play in drawing in the Gentiles. If John was indeed a member of Qumran we could at least say that his mission drew him beyond the monastic community so that he could play his public role in the coming of Jesus, the true Messiah of Israel and all the nations.

Here we have shown how John may have acquired his learning from this desert community, but what did the people expect of him, a reed shaken in the wind? Did God send His messenger as a weak man, incompetent, ready to bow to every passion of men, unsure of himself, apologetic, pathetic and feeble? No, He did not, and through the past ages, He had prepared John for his amazing entry onto the stage of life, like the cloud the size of a man’s hand, growing into a storm cloud and then breaking upon the wilderness landscape in a thunderous fury. His first words to the crowd stunned them, *Luk 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* He starts as he means to go on, because he is on the Lord’s side.

Did the people really expect a person like John to be fashionable and have fine dining? Such people are royalty and they are hard to relate to, *Luk 7:25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.* John is the person God chose to herald the Messiah, who said Himself, *Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, **because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;** he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* If this speaks of John’s day, it also speaks to our day as well, because the Gospel had more traction among the poor, *Luk 7:22 **to the poor the gospel is preached.***

How could John have possibly been believed if he lived sumptuously, how too could Jesus do the same? These prosperity gospel preachers who take salaries off of the people, in the order of millions of pounds, and make their congregations happy to be rich, have missed the point, *Mar 10:23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, **"It's hard for rich people to get into God's kingdom!"*** *Mar 10:24 The disciples were shocked to hear this. So Jesus told*

them again, "It's terribly hard to get into God's kingdom! Mar 10:25 In fact, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into God's kingdom." CEV.

Being rich is not incompatible with the Kingdom, but what you do with the wealth that God has given you is the issue. If it is used for others rather than self-consumption it is well used, else it is a distraction, a temptation and a curse, *Jas 5:1 You rich people should cry and weep! Terrible things are going to happen to you. Jas 5:2 Your treasures have already rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Jas 5:3 Your money has rusted, and the rust will be evidence against you, as it burns your body like fire. Yet you keep on storing up wealth in these last days. Jas 5:4 You refused to pay the people who worked in your fields, and now their unpaid wages are shouting out against you. The Lord All-Powerful has surely heard the cries of the workers who harvested your crops. Jas 5:5 While here on earth, you have thought only of filling your own stomachs and having a good time. But now you are like fat cattle on their way to be butchered. Jas 5:6 You have condemned and murdered innocent people, who couldn't even fight back.* CEV.

What do you say to that, you rich church pastors, can you honestly expect me to believe the prosperity Gospel when you accumulate wealth for wealth's sake? I know one person who is tempting you with money, it is the devil, *Luk 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* Another translation puts it, *Luk 16:13 "No servant can be the slave of two masters; such a slave will hate one and love the other or will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* GNB.

In this world money and power account for much, but they did not amount to a hill of beans for John the Baptist, *Luk 7:26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. Luk 7:27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Luk 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.* He was unsurpassed as the greatest prophet, but he did not surpass the glory of the citizens of Heaven.

Like King David, he was not as powerful as the citizens of Heaven, *Zec 12:8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and **he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David**; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.* The Law of Moses which had nurtured all of the OT brethren did not bring them to the measure and stature of Christ.

I was led to think about Christ and the form that He took when He came among us. He is so often portrayed as a weak bodied man, pale in complexion, quiet in His manners, the gentle Jesus meek and mild of western Christianity. When God was choosing His body, from the vast range that were available to Him, in the divine dressing room, what did He choose from all of the shapes and sizes? One that could last thirty years and take all the abuse thrown at Him, one that was strong enough for the manual labour of his youth, one that could withstand the searing heat of the day, one that could withstand the extremes of life and the uncertainty of having no permanent place to lay His head.

Like John, He was unyielding in the face of opposition, but then, He was God. The vessel to bear the image, God Himself, was truly human, but the mind was the mind of God. When we see Jesus, disputing with the Scribes and Pharisees, we sometimes fail to see, that these men are questioning God Himself. If only they could have seen the Power and Glory that was veiled before them, they would have trembled and fallen on their faces. But the foolish religious leaders could not see and were blinded by their own self-importance.

We are coming to the place in this narrative where the views of just who John and Jesus were, begin to polarise among the people, and depart from the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus anticipates the division by showing them He and John were not divided. This event cements them together, unites them in one Gospel and turns them upon the hypocritical religion of the scribes and Pharisees, *Luk 7:29 Everyone had been listening to John. Even the tax collectors had obeyed God and had done what was right by letting John baptize them. Luk 7:30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the Law of Moses refused to obey God and be baptized by John. CEV.*

There is on one side, the common man, the publicans and sinners, and they obeyed God and did what John said, but the so called experts in the law refused to obey God and be baptised by John. The divide had opened up between the faithful and the unbelievers, and it would get wider still.

Just be careful in following the experts in this life. The expert does not know everything, and unless they are born again, they lead their followers to the slaughter house.

54. My generation *Luke 7: 31 - 35*

Luk 7:31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? Luk 7:32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. Luk 7:33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine;

and ye say, He hath a devil. Luk 7:34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! Luk 7:35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Firstly let us determine who the “men of this generation” are. I do not think that they are the people who willingly obeyed the Gospel call, *Luk 7:29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.* I don’t think that they are the people and especially the tax collectors that followed John. I think they liked John and Jesus, and were willing to do what they were told.

The other men were different, *Luk 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.* They would not come and follow and would make all manner of excuses why they did not follow him. They said, John has a devil because he lives an austere life and Jesus eats and drinks too much, so we don’t follow Him. For this reason, I think that the “men of this generation” applies to the Pharisees and lawyers.

Our Lord almost despairs of the people before Him, “What are you like?” He seems to say. In another time, the prophet Elijah would say, *1Ki 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, **How long halt ye between two opinions?** if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

Of course Elijah and John were like two peas in a pod, *Mat 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Mat 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Mat 11:14 **And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.** Mat 11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Both John and Jesus preached the same message, make no bones about it, they were on the same page when it came to teaching, but there was a certain austerity about John and a certain flamboyance about Jesus, but that did not invite vile slurs by the “children in the market”. Why do people fight so hard against God?

Their arguments are not even rational. Because a man neither eats nor drinks, it does not follow that He has a devil. Because a man comes eating and drinking does not mean He is gluttonous and alcoholic, and equating that to a friendship with tax collectors and sinners is ludicrous. It is as ridiculous as atheist Richard Dawkins argument against creationists. He often takes to Twitter to express his views on different subjects and recently tweeted about young-earth creationists. He said, “I said I'd never despise individuals, just their views. But there are limits, and Young Earth Creationists who refuse to look at evidence pass mine.”

Why does Dawkins get so angry and what evidence does he give for his view that? He says that, "At some point a particularly remarkable molecule was formed by accident. We will call it the *Replicator*. It may not have been the biggest or the most complex molecule around, but it had the extraordinary property of being able to create copies of itself." Was Dawkins there when he says it happened? That's arrant nonsense and he as a molecular biologist knows it. The formation of "a remarkable molecule" with no name, "by accident", is none other than a miracle by any other name. A miracle by definition is "an extraordinary and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws".

A molecule was "formed by accident" and that is all there is to life and it explains the complex knowledge based systems derived from unthinking atoms. It ranks in explanations, with "the dog ate my homework", for having no answer for homework, to the equally implausible banana fairy who waived her wand and magic's a molecule capable of being "able to make copies of itself". It a guess and that's all he gives, no verifiable facts, and it is from that, that he has the cheek to get annoyed at creationists. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6R9DzSn70w> **Top 6 Embarrassing Atheist Moments**).

Answers in Genesis takes up the story. "Now, what do we say back to atheists like Dawkins who publicly despise us? Well, we certainly don't despise them. We recognize that they are blinded from the truth, *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* They have bought into a delusion and suppressed the knowledge of God that they have because of their unrighteousness *Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

People like Dawkins (just like everyone) desperately need Jesus Christ. No, we don't despise Dawkins. We pray that someday he will recognize his need for a Saviour, will repent, and will put his faith and trust in Christ and what He did for him. We would eagerly welcome him into the body of Christ!"

We must come back to the first great work of God in the human soul, **the New Birth**, to understand why these people behave in the way that they do. They are just incapable of seeing the truth because their nature is corrupted by sin, *Psa 53:1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. Psa 53:2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Psa 53:3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Does the nature of man, being sinful, stop him from doing things that help others, from being kind, from sacrificing their life for another? It does not, we see some excellent works done in this world by people who have no interest in Christ, but there is nothing good about it. Good must be defined by the absolute authority, *Deu 12:28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that **which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.*** If an act is not done for the right motive, in the sight of God, it is not good. That is why “works” do not merit anything in getting in to heaven.

So there is none good, but does this mean that a man cannot reason because his mind is set on evil. No, it does not, in fact, reason is the very thing which allows us to function in part. But the thought functions do not act independently, there is another force at play, and at times reason does not function. An addict will not hear you when you tell him he is going to kill himself if he goes on abusing substances, but the craving for a “fix” does little more than drag him further down, the dopamine receptors requiring more and more of the drug.

There is also a much larger danger in this universe that intervenes to destroy reason for its own ends, namely the devil, and we cannot underestimate the impact he has on reason. As a child, I set my bedroom curtains on fire and burnt the new paintwork my father had spent all morning doing, while idly playing with matches. Why, when I knew the dangers fire did I do it? So many things that I did as a child were foolish, *Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child*, and that was my nature, but it did not explain why it was so self destructive.

The devil attempts to destroy man and in the process damn them to an eternal death with no hope of remission, *Mar 9:17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; Mar 9:18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away:.....Mar 9:22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*

The devil tried to destroy our Lord, *Mat 4:5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, Mat 4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* That fiend will try anyway he can to destroy us.

The Lord God will also delude men that they should believe a lie, *2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 2Th 2:9 Even*

*him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Th 2:11 **And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:** 2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Whatever the cause, it is difficult, for the natural man can never tell when he has been deceived, and like the men of Sodom they do not perceive reality, *Gen 19:11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.* Men should ask the question, "Can I think and perceive correctly?" because the Bible says they cannot.

That is where we come back to the New Birth, which is the first step on the road to sanity. It does not make one infallibly correct, but it does enable the mind to clear its thinking, *Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* God must have removed the obstacle to that transformation, since He demands that you know His will, but we still have to work to prove it.

This is one of the tests of the New Birth. It is renewal. It is a positive action that can be seen in the thoughts and actions of the person claiming to be born again. If you are born again, you will show an increase in the knowledge of God, the Scripture, and you will show an increasing conformity to the Scripture. The person that is born again will **not** contradict or deny his Lord. For example, if God said He made the world and all the creatures in 6 days, the born again person accepts that He did just that. The born again person may not be able to explain the miracle of Creation, indeed no one can because they were not there, but he believes Him, Jesus, he believes the Lord above all else.

If you are born again, you will acknowledge Jesus is the Messiah, *1Jn 2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 1Jn 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 1Jn 2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.* If you have the Son then you have the Father.

You unpack the bad things you have been taught, and you pray for a restored mind, *Luk 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, **and in his right mind:** and they were afraid.*

You ask Jesus to clear out the junk that you have stored in your memory over the years and renew you. You may have been taught by earnest teachers, some of them “good”, but where did they get their teaching from? Did they even think about it? I am not talking about empirical things, things which can be proved, but the underlying thoughts that accompany this. For example, you have the biology and physiology of the human body, and from this you try to interpret life. What is life, what is the soul, what is death and is there existence after life. These questions, the meta-physical questions, are at the heart of the teachings that we have swallowed and may be untrue.

Christ helps you unpack them, unravel them, and throw out the false teachings. He gives you a new world view, He gives you a new birth. Anyone who continues to think unchanged by Jesus is I believe, an unregenerate person, not Born Again.

You stop following men and you follow the pattern of the NT, you have a godly fear and a distrust of men’s teaching and their position. You relearn the meaning of life and you cry, “give me Jesus”. It is every day, day in day out, month upon month, year upon year, devoted to knowing Jesus. You repent of your old ways, which is another way of showing that you are Born Again.

You examine your former personal relationships. You do not go into life with the same relationships without examining the basis on which they are formed and you watch them carefully to see what they do to your faith, *2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;* You are made by the new birth, a friend of God and have a relationship with his people not with the world, *1Jn 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 1Jn 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

This and much more are the things which accompany the New Birth. These are the things which Jesus said the “men of this generation” lacked and so they remained dead in their sins. They could not think properly, they could not think rationally and above all, they hated Jesus and everything that He stood for. They were like selfish children who couldn’t make up their minds, and sulked when any one started another game in which they were not in control.

Wisdom, says Jesus, is declared righteous by **her** children, is declared just, by what the children do, *Pro 1:20 Wisdom shouts in the streets wherever crowds gather. Pro 1:21 She shouts in the marketplaces and near the city gates as she says to the people, Pro 1:22 "How much longer will you enjoy being stupid fools?*

*Won't you ever stop sneering and laughing at knowledge? Pro 1:23 **Listen as I correct you and tell you what I think.** CEV.*

The “children” of their mother Wisdom, heed her, do what she tells them, and in listening to their mother, are wise. *1Pe 1:14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 1Pe 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 1Pe 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Thereby we see the children of God and the children of the devil.

55. Dinner with the Pharisees *Luke 7: 36 - 39*

Luk 7:36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. Luk 7:37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, Luk 7:38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Luk 7:39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

I think this is exactly the same event recorded in all the four Gospels with more or less detail. The fact that in Luke it seems to be out of sequence, that it is told far from Galilee, in Bethany, near Jerusalem, leads us to think that there is a reason for it being included here. It is inserted here, I think, because it is an example of **Wisdom** being justified by her children and so follows this statement, *Luk 7:35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.* We shall explore what I mean by this as we go on.

It does not say this event happened in Galilee. It merely states “*And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him*”. It says nothing about the place or time that this event occurred. It does not say that this event immediately follows the preceding event. Let us look at the other Gospel accounts.

Mat 26:6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, Mat 26:7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. Mat 26:8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? Mat 26:9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

*Joh 12:1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. Joh 12:2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Joh 12:3 Then took **Mary** a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Joh 12:4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Joh 12:5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*

Bethany is a town which lies on the other side of the Mount of Olives, roughly the same distance as the Mount is from Jerusalem, 2 miles journey from Jerusalem. Jesus knows a number of people here and it seems that He lodged there, *Mat 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.* Maybe He had two places to stay, one in Jerusalem and one in Bethany, but as He became more famous, this was a quieter place to stay, but still close enough to Jerusalem.



How did Jesus come to know this little family so well? It says that Jesus loved Lazarus, and it was natural to call on His assistance when Lazarus fell ill, *Joh 11:3*

Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.....Joh 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. It is quite likely the Jesus had dealings with them early in His ministry, and that they had, as a family, found salvation in Christ. It could have happened in a number of ways, for example, they were introduced by one of the disciples anxious to share his good fortune of finding the Messiah.

Or it could be that Mary found Jesus, and was one of those soul's who possessed with demons who had them cast out by Jesus, *Luk 8:2 And certain **women**, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.* Now we all assume the worst of women, and that the Magdalene must have been a prostitute, and Mary sister of Lazarus must have been up to something similar. That is why we find a woman caught in adultery and brought before Jesus, but no sign whatsoever of the man. In fact it would have made an interesting alternative story if the Jews had brought both the man and the woman, **caught** in the act, to Jesus for judgement. The following comment by Adam Clarke deserves mention,

“Poor Mary Magdalene is made the patroness of penitent prostitutes, both by Papists and Protestants; and to the scandal of her name, and the reproach of the Gospel, houses fitted up for the reception of such are termed Magdalene hospitals! and the persons themselves Magdalenes!

There is not only no proof that this person was such as commentators represent her, but there is the strongest presumptive proof against it: for, if she ever had been such, it would have been contrary to every rule of prudence, and every dictate of wisdom, for Christ and his apostles to have permitted such a person to associate with them, however fully she might have been converted to God, and however exemplary her life, at that time, might have been.

As the world, who had seen her conduct, and knew her character, (had she been such as is insinuated), could not see the inward change, and as they sought to overwhelm Christ and his disciples with obloquy and reproach on every occasion, they would certainly have availed themselves of so favourable an opportunity to subject the character and ministry of Christ to the blackest censure, had he permitted even a converted prostitute to minister to him and his disciples. They were ready enough to say that he was the friend of publicans and sinners, because he conversed with them in order to instruct and save their souls; but they could never say he was a friend of prostitutes, because it does not appear that such persons ever came to Christ; or that he, in the way of his ministry, ever went to them.”

I think that we should be careful how we judge Mary's sin, "*if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner*", and I would sooner be judged by Christ than a Pharisee who is clearly not a prophet. She may have been a sinner, but so are we, and we would be condemned with her apart from the mercy of Christ but to attribute her sin to prostitution is not fair.

I think it is unfair on Mary, to make her a scapegoat for sins that make us feel better about our own sins. Prostitution seems a far worse sin than the other sins which we commit. We self-righteous people forget that we were once sinners, but it is always easy to pick on someone who cannot defend themselves, and we, with the secret sins, in the dark recesses of the heart, hidden from view, dare to bully such as her? The self-righteous Simon, the arch hypocrite, the leper cleansed dares to accuse Mary, but she has an able Advocate.

Mary enters the house in tears. As soon as she heard that Jesus was in that place went to Him. *Luk 7:37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, Luk 7:38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

Why is Mary in tears? She could be in tears knowing that her sins are forgiven and that they are tears of sorrow and tears of joy. I think that in part is true, but she also is looking forward, because she knows that Jesus will die and unlike the rest of the disciples, and the Pharisee, Simon, she is sad. Simon is more concerned with the "now", but Mary is running beyond that, *Mat 26:12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, **she did it for my burial.** Mat 26:13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

Mary did not take her forgiveness and run back to the world, to the people that she knew and continue her old relationships again. She was not free of her burdens to gather new burdens, *Luk 11:25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Luk 11:26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* She had changed, and as soon as she knew that Jesus was at a house in the city, it was her greatest desire to come and serve Him. I came across this interesting thought while I was preparing this ministry,

But was what did the breaking of the alabaster jar, and pouring the perfume on Jesus head, mean for Mary and what did it mean culturally at the time. In the days Jesus was on earth, when a young woman

reached the age of availability for marriage, her family would purchase an alabaster box for her and fill it with precious ointment. The size of the box and the value of the ointment would parallel her family's wealth. This alabaster box would be part of her dowry.

When a young man came to ask for her in marriage, she would respond by taking the alabaster box and breaking it at his feet. The gesture of anointing his feet showed him honour. So what she was doing was pretty much giving her whole life and whole self to Jesus. Without the alabaster jar and perfume, her future didn't include marriage. Her future was totally wrapped up in Jesus. Without a husband to provide for her, how was she going to live? Without a husband, who was she? But she realized that no man would be better than her Jesus. When she broke that alabaster jar and poured her expensive perfume over Jesus in front of a room of men, she was giving up a portion of her dowry, her reputation, and most importantly her heart.

It is reminiscent of the Song of Songs, *Son 1:3 and you smell so sweet. All the young women adore you; the very mention of your name is like spreading perfume.* CEV. In those sweaty days of old, before deodorants, before luxury soaps, before shampoos, before aftershaves, people must have had a lot of body odour. When I used to come through the airport, on my way home from Ghana, the first thing I did was go to the perfume counter and have a good spray of fragrance to mask my body odour. That is all it did, mask it. To remove the smell you had to wash first and then you could cover yourself in perfume.

In the Pharisee's house there are lots of sweaty men, and in a day when it was normal to sweat, you got used to it. The air would hang heavy with it but you would accept it. In this atmosphere, the sudden smell of the ointment would have an immediate effect of creating a different and pleasant ambience. It was a bit like the Tabernacle. Outside there was the stink of burning flesh, like a crematorium, inside the curtains there was a precious and beautiful smell, calming and heavenly. ***Joh 12:3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.***

We do not forget that Christ is the Tabernacle, *Heb 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;*

And the Tabernacle and furniture also had to be consecrated with the oil of anointing, *Exo 30:22 Moreover the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Exo 30:23 Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, Exo 30:24 And of cassia five*

*hundred shekels, **after the shekel of the sanctuary**, and of oil olive an hin: Exo 30:25 And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. Exo 30:26 And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, Exo 30:27 And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, Exo 30:28 And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver **and his foot**. Exo 30:29 And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.....Exo 30:32 Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Exo 30:33 Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or **whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people**.*

The oil for the first sanctuary is different from the oil for the true "Tabernacle". The cost of the anointing oil was estimated by Judas as worth 100 Shekels of silver (300 denarius), *Joh 12:5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?* From what I can find out, the shekel of the sanctuary was worth about \$560 or £450. This would make the total value of a "pound" of the ointment the Mary brought about ½ a million pounds. Another more conservative estimate puts it at \$50,000, still a very large sum.

Now here is a strange thing. In the supposed world of men, where men did the anointing, where men conducted the ritual, all is turned on its head. A woman anoints a King, anoints the heavenly Tabernacle, a preparation for death and the coming Kingdom.

I state one further mystery which will be dealt with later, and it is, "was Mary of Bethany also Mary Magdalene?"

56. Forgiveness, something or nothing? Luke 7: 39 - 50

Luk 7:39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. Luk 7:40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. Luk 7:41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. Luk 7:42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Luk 7:43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. Luk 7:44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet:

but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Luk 7:45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Luk 7:46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Luk 7:47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Luk 7:48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. Luk 7:49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? Luk 7:50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

This story is inserted here is an illustration of “Wisdom being justified by her **children**”, said by Jesus in conclusion to the story about the Pharisee’s behaving like children in the market place. Luke has decided to link the story of the woman’s sacrifice of the alabaster box, with this story of “wisdom being justified by her children”, and so I think this passage is not in chronological order, but illustrative. Luke recalled the later occurring event as an appropriate illustration of what he is talking about here. Wisdom.

Wisdom, of course, is the Lord Jesus, *1Co 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 1Co 1:30 But of him are ye in **Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom**, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 1Co 1:31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

We have seen Mary’s attitude to Jesus, her devotion, her deep sense of remorse for her past life, her desire to make up for it to Jesus, her love and self sacrifice towards Him. If we only had a sense of the reality she had, I am sure that our lives would be more devoted to Christ than the miserable excuses we make for service.

The **children** of our story, whom wisdom justifies, are Mary, who anoints Jesus against His death, Simon the Pharisee who does nothing for Jesus and the disciples who have absolutely no idea of the situation. Mary is justified, but Simon is not, thus showing by her kind actions that she is righteous. Well you say, that’s nice, but how does it relate to me? Are you showing that you are wisdom’s child? This passage shows two types of religious life style, so if the hat fits, wear it, or change it if necessary.

The story is set around Passover and I am trying to join up the narrative and I warn the reader that it is mostly speculative. Simon the Pharisee, aka Simon the leper, has made a feast for Jesus, and he has invited friends, among them Lazarus, Martha and Mary. His disciples were also present along with Judas. They behold the extravagant gesture by Mary and think the money would better be spent on the poor than anointing Jesus. Although Judas is the spokesman for this event, the others had their own motives for backing him up. It shows how little the men thought of Jesus, to begrudge the Lord of the Universe such a singular

blessing, by anointing Him with sweet smelling perfume. The men were an ignorant callous bunch.

The old Pharisee too, is like so many people who call themselves Christians, and they think that they have arrived at the top spot but in reality they have not started to comprehend the faith. He sits in his position as judge, watching the Jewish teacher out of one corner of his eye and the woman who has entered with the curious box made of alabaster. He did not pay much attention to Martha who served them, but was fascinated by her sister Mary. He knew Mary and for whatever reason she was a sinner, he was determined to put Jesus to the test. He knew her because he was from the same town and in a small town gossip travels fast.

How had Simon come to know Jesus? He had probably been healed by Him, having acquired leprosy at some stage in his life after he had become a Pharisee, and for a while was an outcast. Jesus had restored him and he was returning the favour by having Him along as guest at a feast. In fact it was a feast of sinners and those who had been restored. There was Lazarus, restored from the grave, Simon restored from leprosy, Mary restored from the demon possession, the disciples restored to life, all anticipating a great event involving Jesus but it seem only Mary knew what it was, His death.

Simon does not seem to understand forgiveness. He does not see himself as a sinner, he does not see that healing and forgiveness of sin are two separate things, but confounds the two. They are in his mind the same thing, to be healed is to be forgiven. He does not understand that his life must be a life of service now, and that service was to God, *Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: Deu 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* If you were truly God's servant you had no other occupation, *1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 1Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Sin is not an issue for Simon personally, but it is for other people. It should be an issue for him, but he has moved up in the hierarchy of men, he sees himself as better, though sin it seems does not to affect him, *Joh 9:40 When the Pharisees heard Jesus say this, they asked, "Are we blind?" Joh 9:41 Jesus answered, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty. But now that you claim to see, you will keep on being guilty."* CEV. So he goes on being guilty.

Simon is a righteous man, some would say self-righteous. He is such a "good" man that he is perhaps the example Jesus uses of the Pharisee who went to the Temple to pray, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or*

even as this publican. Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. He was morally upright, obedient to the law, but he lacked that essential humility, Luk 18:14 for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Augustine said, "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels."

Because he saw himself as righteous and not as a sinner, he looked down on people, he despised them and this gave him a superior attitude. Christians can be like that. "Look at me, I have been saved, I am not like you other people, God is on my side", and before you know it, there you are, sitting next to your brother Simon, and you are judging others, condemning them, being high minded, and you have forgotten most of the beatitudes. I think you are almost pushing God off of His throne in your attempt to be righteous. You say "now I see and your sin remains".

The Pharisees knew the Scripture, or at least thought they did. When Scripture did not give a straight answer, they invented one, and it gave rise to Rabbinic books of interpretation that became for them their Bible. They forgot the important things, *Mat 23:23 "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You give to God one tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty. These you should practice, without neglecting the others. Mat 23:24 Blind guides! You strain a fly out of your drink, but swallow a camel!* GNB. I am not saying they were wrong in following Scripture, they were just blindsided to its real message.

This led to an inability to reason outside of their frame of reference. To the Pharisee, everything was black and white, clear cut, with no uncertainty. They lived in a box where everything was ordered, and everything done according to a ritual, but it was not the box which God made. It was more like a coffin, full of death, dead works, and a lifeless religion, *Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Mat 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

They are self righteous and never see anything from the other person's viewpoint because they are blinkered. They cannot see to lift a finger to help others, and they see their own cattle as better than their fellow man, *Mat 12:11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? Mat 12:12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.*

They are so insensitive to the needs of others, their fellow man, that they will, like the other Jews, walk by on the other side of the road, instead of helping them, and have no pity on other men. Jesus becomes so incensed with their behaviour, that He reserves a series of “woes” to them in Matthew chapter 23.

Have you seen in this, the life of the selfish Christian? It differs little from the life of the Pharisee. It is a life lived in the name of religion, with Christ as an excuse to look down on others who are less fortunate than yourself. To carry on with some form of service that suits you but bears no relationship to the service of Christ. In fact the selfish Christian is so pleased with his version of Christianity that he does not even need to examine it, to see if it conforms to Christ’s teaching.

The Pharisee is in short, a law to himself and his life is not Christ centred, in fact he seems to regard Christ as an equal. He certainly does not trust in Christ but in himself.

There was a smell in that house where the feast took place, or rather two smells. One you could only smell spiritually, the other you could smell with your nostrils. One was the ugly, foul stench of hypocrisy, coming from the hearts of men who thought they were being good but had totally missed the mark. The other was the perfume anointing Jesus, from the gentle heart of Mary.

I think that the contrast between the two types of person is brought out by Jesus, who knowing what was going on in the heart of the Pharisee and the disciples, brings out to the whole company, what they really were like in their hearts. It is not good and Jesus rebukes them.

To the disciples gathered He says, *Mat 26:8 But **when his disciples saw it**, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? Mat 26:9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. Mat 26:10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. Mat 26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. Mat 26:12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Mat 26:13 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

To Simon the Pharisee He says, *Luk 7:40 And Jesus answering said unto him, **Simon**, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. Luk 7:41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. Luk 7:42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Luk 7:43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. Luk 7:44 And he turned to*

the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Luk 7:45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Luk 7:46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Luk 7:47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Luk 7:48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

Simon and the disciples are both religious but have entirely missed the core values of faith. They get clear rebukes from Jesus for their attitudes, which can only be described as bullying. The woman however is blessed by a lasting memorial, “*Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her*” and also, “*Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven*”. There is no question as to who is the child justified by her parents wisdom. It is the woman.

It further says something about the maturity and faith of the disciples. Where are John and Peter in all of this, those who wrote such high minded words in later years? They say nothing and if they did not say anything they must have agreed with the other disciples. But worse is yet to come, as the weakness of the 12 is seen and we move to the crucifixion. The disciples could not watch, even one hour with Jesus, *Mat 26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Judas the traitor disciple betrays Jesus. Peter denies Jesus and betrays the trust Jesus put in him, then **all** the disciples leave Him in fear for their lives, Mat 26:55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. Mat 26:56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*

This is a sad commentary on male discipleship before the crucifixion. A story of weakness and betrayal, but we must not forget one important and life changing event that occurred, *Luk 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* This transformational event which turned cowards into men of integrity, who gave their lives for the Gospel and for Christ, was the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

This is a prime example of the words Jesus had said, *Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he*

cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Without the Holy Spirit we are just ordinary people and we shall not get to Heaven's Kingdom.

We have seen the different attitudes to Christ, in the behaviour towards Him. We have seen the overflowing love and future vision of the woman, and we have seen the obduracy and hardness of the men who professed religious knowledge. This brings us to a final question on this subject, and that is, who justified the wisdom of God? Who is the true child of God?

57. The sister's of Christ *Luke 8: 1 - 3*

Luk 8:1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, Luk 8:2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, Luk 8:3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

It is of note that this section is placed immediately after the passage which so put the disciples in a bad light and the woman in a good light. Just who the woman Mary turns out to be, we shall God Willing find out.

The disciples of Jesus are the men and women mentioned here in Luke, and those who ministered of their "substance", were the women. I do not find the men, the so called "bread winners", supporting anyone. They carry about with them a charity box, but I have no record of the men putting in to it and it is filled by the women's labours. It is a remarkable difference that is brought out between the two sexes. It is just not mentioned that the men gave of their substance or did the men really expect the women to provide everything? The men kept the charity box, but the woman gave the alabaster box of perfume.

Among the four gospels, the gospel of Luke specifically alludes to the women that were associated with Christ's ministry. Luke wrote about the many of the details of the early life of Jesus, giving the viewpoint of the women such as Mary, Elisabeth, and Anna. He also recorded about the widow of Nain, the woman at Simon's feast, Martha, the crippled woman, Jairus' daughter and the sick woman healed on the same occasion. And in the book of Acts, Luke wrote about Sapphira, Priscilla, Drusilla, Berenice, Tabitha, Rhoda, Lydia, and other women. In so doing, he wanted to give the message that Kingdom of Heaven is as much for women as for men.

Is this domestic role, this support role, all that a woman does? Paul says that the brothers have a right to take a wife with them, *1Co 9:5 We each have the right to*

marry one of the Lord's followers and to take her along with us, just as the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Peter do. CEV. This helper role extends to teaching with the man, *Act 18:26 Apollos started speaking bravely in the Jewish meeting place. **But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to their home and helped him understand God's Way even better.** Act 18:27 Apollos decided to travel through Achaia. So the Lord's followers wrote letters, encouraging the followers there to welcome him. After Apollos arrived in Achaia, he was a great help to everyone who had put their faith in the Lord Jesus because of God's kindness.* CEV.

The sisters have a particular ministry to woman, *Tit 2:4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, Tit 2:5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.* This seem to go against the words of Paul, *1Ti 2:9 I would like for women to wear modest and sensible clothes. They should not have fancy hairdos, or wear expensive clothes, or put on jewelry made of gold or pearls. 1Ti 2:10 Women who claim to love God should do helpful things for others, 1Ti 2:11 and they should learn by being quiet and paying attention. 1Ti 2:12 **They should be silent and not be allowed to teach or to tell men what to do.** 1Ti 2:13 After all, Adam was created before Eve, 1Ti 2:14 and the man Adam wasn't the one who was fooled. It was the woman Eve who was completely fooled and sinned.* CEV. We have to reconcile those verses with the ones saying that the woman is to teach the younger women. To teach or not to teach, that is the question.

I want to say this and it is a comment only on this subject because I do not intend to go into the subject now. We still bear the sins of Adam although forgiven, and we shall die because of them, but we have to live with them. The woman is to remember that she was in the original sin, and that she was totally taken in by the devil. She might be an equal or greater person in intellect, she may like to assume the lead because of this, she might think the men are so weak that she would take the "man's" role, but she is told that she must not disturb God's order. If she does not take the lead, but if she works with man, if she sticks to her role as she was made, teaching is alright.

Adam does not come out of it lightly, should you think that all the blame is on the woman, for he is remembered for the whole catastrophe of sin, *1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* But the Lord still must have order in Creation, and throwing that aside because we have a New Covenant, because there is neither male nor female in Christ, is to lose the distinction between the Created order and the forgiveness of Christ. We as men and women are equal according to the benefits of Christ, but not according to the Created order, *1Co 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is*

God. Paul upholds this. Male and female relationships in the Gospel, in the church, in daily life, must always be governed by God's order.

The first woman mentioned here in Luke chapter 8, is Mary Magdalene, and as we have already seen, there is nothing to link her to prostitution, although history has not been kind to her, and she is associated with fallen women and perfumery. The Catholic Church linked her name with the infamous asylums. The Magdalene Laundries in Ireland, also known as Magdalene asylums, were institutions usually run by Roman Catholic orders, and which operated from the 18th to the late 20th centuries. They were run ostensibly to house "fallen women", an estimated 30,000 of whom were confined in these institutions in Ireland. In 1993, unmarked graves of 155 women were uncovered in the convent grounds of one of the laundries. This led to media revelations about the operations of the secretive institutions. A formal state apology was issued in 2013, and a £50 million compensation scheme for survivors was set up by the Irish Government. The religious orders which operated the laundries have rejected activist demands that they financially contribute to this programme.

This religious hypocrisy did not extend to forgiveness and kindness but rather to the punishment for these unfortunate women. The whole aim of the Catholic Church it seems to me, is to extract as much punishment out of an individual as possible, and thereby undermine the free grace of Christ. The stigma that they made around pregnancy and the unmarried women, gave rise to guilt feelings among people who considered the only way to overcome it was to hide it in an institution. Like the woman taken in adultery by the Pharisee's, only the woman was made a scapegoat and the men who were to blame did not answer for their part in it. The lesson that the Catholic church gave was to hide sin, not go to Christ for forgiveness. But this is not our Mary Magdalene, and she had nothing to do with the dark practices that would follow her name. In fact, I believe she would be appalled at the things done in her name and in the name of religion.

Who is Mary? Is Mary of Bethany one and the same as Mary Magdalene? I think that they are and I will give my reasons, but the evidence is circumstantial. I take the woman in Matthew 26, Luke 7, Mark 14 and John 12 as all talking about the same Mary and I covered it in Chapter 55 of this series, "Dinner with the Pharisees". It certainly seems that this woman is Mary of Bethany.

I thought that such a prominent disciple, Mary of Bethany, who only days before had given the Master such devoted service, would be there for Him at the end, *Mat 26:12 What she did was to pour this perfume on my body to get me ready for burial.* GNB. But Mary of Bethany is nowhere to be found after this event, and she is not mentioned again in Scripture. Another Mary, Mary Magdalene, now comes to prominence instead and is found taking the news of Jesus resurrection to the disciples, *Luk 24:9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. Luk 24:10 It was Mary Magdalene, and*

Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

It may be that Mary was given a new name. Μαγδαλά = Magdala is the place in Galilee where Jesus visited, and the word means the tower, (that is, *Migdala*). Could it be that Mary of Bethany is given a new name, consistent with her strength of character, a strong tower? From Bethany to Magdala.

There is a precedent. Peter and Paul have name changes, *Joh 1:42 Then he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas." (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock.")* GNB. *Act 13:9 Then Saul, better known as Paul,* CEV. Biblically, names are given to express a trait or quality of a person. The word Abram Means Exalted father and Abraham means father of a multitude, *Gen 17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.* The word Sarai means princely and Sarah means queen of princes or mother of princes, *Gen 17:15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*

We shall see her one day and we shall know if we were correct in our assumptions about her but for now we have attempted to identify her with the information that we have. What we know about her is that she is a strong woman, a faithful woman, a devoted woman, and a loving woman. She has a quality of self sacrifice seen in the anointing of Jesus with precious ointment, and it goes right through to beyond the cross. She is not like the fearful disciples that fled, or like Peter, the rock, who crumbled in the face of the betrayal, and refused to acknowledge Jesus. She is a pillar of the Church.

I would have expected to hear more of her faith following the resurrection, seen more of her exploits in guiding the newly formed church, but scripture is silent. There is the Gnostic Gospel of Mary (Magdalene) but that is not included in the canon of Scripture, and doesn't say much about her, except to say that she played a role equivalent to an Apostle. Why does not Luke say anything of her in his next book, Acts?

Scripture is not written to satisfy our curiosity. It is focused upon Christ and as long as an individual is serving His purpose, they appear in Scripture. They disappear but He remains. And it is appropriate she goes, leaving us with that sacred thought that she is an example to men and women, of the restoration of the relationship with the last Adam, of womanhood restored.

What of Joanna and Susanna? Joanna was in a position of influence. Her husband was a steward of Herod, who probably lived in the city of Tiberius. Chuza must have been sympathetic to Jesus, and let his wife go off and minister to Him. It

says a lot of him that he was not afraid to be known as the husband of one of Jesus supporters.

Joanna turns up again at the Crucifixion, and I assume Susannah does too, *Luk 24:10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. Luk 24:11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.* When they had finished serving Christ, their ministry ceased. They were primarily there to serve Jesus, *Luk 8:2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, Luk 8:3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which **ministered unto him** of their substance.* They were there to support Jesus.

These were **chosen women**, and there were some whose names are lost to us, "**and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance**", were part of Jesus support network. They appear, do their work and then disappear. There may be another reason that Mary does not appear again in scripture.

All along, we have seen her, with the enigma of her name changes, yet unmistakably the same person, taking upon herself the role of "everywoman", every woman that is that shows her love for Jesus. Does every woman that professes Christ have the same undying love and devotion she has? I think not and I seldom see a sister like her. But she is more than an example to Christian women, she is taking us far back in the history of the world, to the first woman.

The Bible says, *2Co 11:3 I am afraid that your minds will be corrupted and **that you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ—in the same way that Eve** was deceived by the snake's clever lies.* GNB. Eve abandoned her devotion to Christ by the lies of the devil. She took her eye off of Christ, as it were, and looked elsewhere for the fulfilment of her desires. Not this time. When we get to Mary, we have womanhood restored. She looks at Christ, never taking her eye off of Him, following Him to His death, following Him to the grave and waiting for Him at the tomb.

She is Eve reborn, restored, and the bride of the last Adam. Fittingly she disappears with Him so that we see the type and the story brought full circle, and no more of her exploits. Did she however do other things? I think that she was too much of an asset not to, but heaven waits to reveal those stories.

And that is the history of the church. The women we have spoken of have many children, some poor in this world but rich beyond measure. Like those women who were far beyond John Bunyan in their understanding (Grace Abounding To The Chief Of Sinners).

But upon a day the good providence of God called me to Bedford to work at my calling, and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun talking about the things of God: and being now willing to hear their discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker of myself in the matters of religion; but I may say I heard, but understood not, for they were far above out of my reach.

Their talk was about a new birth, the work of God in their hearts, as also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature; they talked how God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil; moreover, they reasoned of the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular, and told to each other by what means they had been afflicted, and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart and of their unbelief, and did condemn, slight, and abhor their own righteousness as filthy and insufficient to do them any good.

And methought they spoke as if joy did make them speak; they spoke with such pleasantness of scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world—as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours.

At this I felt my own heart begin to shake and mistrust my condition to be naught, for I saw that in all my thoughts about religion and salvation the new birth did never enter my mind, neither knew I the comfort of the word and promise, nor the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart. As for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them, neither did I understand what Satan's temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood and resisted.

Thus therefore, when I had heard and considered what they said, I left them and went about my employment again, but their talk and discourse went with me; also my heart would tarry with them, for I was greatly affected with their words, both because by them I was convinced that I wanted the true tokens of a truly godly man, and also because by them I was convinced of the happy and blessed condition of him that was such a one. Therefore I would often make it my business to be going again and again into the company of these poor people, for I could not stay away; and the more I went among them, the more I did question my condition; and as I still do remember, presently I found two things within me at which I did sometimes

marvel, especially considering what a blind, ignorant, sordid, and ungodly wretch but just before I was.

The one was a very great softness and tenderness of heart, which caused me to fall under the conviction of what by Scripture they asserted; and the other was a great bending in my mind to a continual meditating on it and on all other good things which at any time I heard or read of.

By these things my mind was now so turned that it lay like a horseleech at the vein, still crying out, Give, give. My mind was so fixed on eternity and on the things about the kingdom of heaven, that is, so far as I knew, though as yet God knows I knew but little, that neither pleasures, nor profits, nor persuasions, nor threats could loose it or make it let go its hold; and though I may speak it with shame, yet it is in very deed a certain truth, it would then have been as difficult for me to have taken my mind from heaven to earth, as I have found it often since to get it again from earth to heaven.

As an eavesdropper on the conversation of these women, it greatly affected Bunyan. What would we have heard from Jesus followers? Nothing less and that is an example to follow.

58. The Parable of the Sower *Luke 8: 4 - 8*

Luk 8:4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: Luk 8:5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Luk 8:6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. Luk 8:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. Luk 8:8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We might say that the farmer was careless in his sowing, because the seed was good but the planting was bad. He could have put the seed into good ground, and it would all have sprung up and yielded “*fruit an hundredfold*”. But it is not a story about the seed, how it works but a story about the landscape into which it is sown, the ground on which it falls, which makes a difference as to how it grows.

This world offers a varied countryside for seed to grow in, from the good land to the dry lands, from the weeds to the arable farms, it is a different story with a different outcome. Ostensibly, the story is a simple one about this



farming life, and most of the hearers would have related to this story, having seen it played out each year, from seedtime to harvest, and in the days before seed drills, the farming method, broad casting, throwing the seed about you, meant that some would inevitably fall in bad places.

It was a good and well known story, but Jesus reserved a tale that ran parallel to it, a parable, for his disciples to understand, *Luk 8:9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? Luk 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Luk 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Luk 8:12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Luk 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. Luk 8:14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. Luk 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

Jesus says that it was given to the disciples to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and so this story opens up for the disciples, revealing another kingdom, and another metaphysical world in which unseen forces work. That seed of the natural world has a parallel in the word of God, the unseen seed. There is a natural seed and there is spiritual seed. Just as there are conditions for the natural seed to grow, so there are conditions for the spiritual seed to grow, and that seed will be dormant until the conditions are met for it to proceed on its course.

Just as the seed in the natural will not grow without moisture and nutrients, neither will the word of God grow without the same conditions, moisture and nutrients, although in the spirit these two have slightly different properties. We must be “born of water and the Spirit”, born again, germinate, come to life. The water and the Spirit are the means by which a person is born into the kingdom. What is it to be born of water and the Spirit? This is a clue.

*Eze 36:25 Then will **I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean:** from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. Eze 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. Eze 36:27 And **I will put my spirit within you,** and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

In the OT, a number of analogies of the new life in the spirit as opposed to this life in the flesh are put forward. Things like the circumcision of the heart in the

spirit, not just circumcision of the fleshly heart, a new heart of flesh instead of a cold dead stone. Washing in “water”, spiritual washing instead of washing in a Mikvah. These were all set out in the OT as outward signs, but it did not stop there because God demanded an inner cleansing of the spirit as well. The Pharisees conformed to the first cleansing but neglected the second, they were clean on the outside but filthy on the inside, *Luk 11:39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.*

There were natural Jews, doing the outward things that made for obedience in the flesh, like the Pharisees, and there were Jews who had been truly circumcised inwardly, and if you will, these are spiritual Jews, *Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.* The spiritual Jews had been born again, *1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* They had the qualities of a citizen of the Kingdom.

This New Birth must start somewhere, and it is in the planting of the seed, the Word of God, the germination of the seed, and that is dependent upon where it lands. But it is not the germination that counts in the long run, it is not the growth of the stalk that counts, it is the fruit it yields, *Luk 8:15 Those seeds that fell on good ground are the people who listen to the message and keep it in good and honest hearts. They last and **produce a harvest**.* CEV. You can get all sorts of growth but what you are after, as a farmer, is the corn.

So if you are born again, if you say you are born again, what does it mean? To some people it is a conversion experience, moving from the old life towards Christ, being a new creature, changing allegiance from the devil to Christ. It comes, it is said, with an assurance of life and the Spirit bears witness with us that we are God's, *Rom 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

But this can only be true for the seed which reaches full maturation, according to the parable before us. A lot of water must go under the bridge of life before we can say that we have produced the fruit required of us, besides, what happens to those people who receive the word with joy for a while? Ask them if they are “Born Again” believers and they will doubtless say, “yes”, and they would say that they have assurance that they are saved, *Luk 8:13 They on the rock are*

*they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which **for a while believe**, and in time of temptation fall away.*

The New Birth, being Born Again, are terms which require some care in use. They are Biblical, and they are essential to entering the Kingdom, for all people, that much is true, but be careful about the level of commitment that a person makes to Christ before you assign that “birth” to them. There must be a change, there must be repentance and there must faith, and that must endure, *Mat 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

The race is not over when you are Born Again, it has just begun.

And what of “Children” you say? Can they be born again? All people must be born again to enter heaven, but you ask me can they be born gain, but why do you ask me? I have not been to heaven to see who is there. I am a creature not a Creator, and my mind is so far below His in its capability to understand, I cannot say what happens. This is just our intellectual curiosity, which God does not answer, and I may or may not have an answer but I trust in my God to do right. In asking this sort of speculative question, we are going too far, and asking about the future state of another is none of our business, *Joh 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Joh 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.* We have a duty, and that is to follow Christ, and not speculate on others.

We are told what the three conditions of man are in respect of the sowing. Firstly there are those who hear the word and the devil takes it “out of their hearts”. The word got into their hearts and went out of their hearts, by an act of the devil and the Lord did nothing to stop it happening. That is a frightening thought for it implies that God condemns them through neglect, *1Pe 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 1Pe 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, **being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*** No, God did not do it through neglect but through appointing them to that end.

We see a strange thing here, and we must bow to the Sovereign will of God, that although He asks us to tell the good news, the Gospel, to all, He does not effectually save every one. It is our duty to preach without fear or favour, not knowing who will respond, not being privy to that outcome, to go ahead and preach the Gospel to all mankind, *1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 1Co 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.* Only when we arrive in heaven will we know for certain how effective we have been.

The Evangelist goes for a commitment, a conversion, salvation, and then it is all over. They do not go for a lifetime commitment, a permanent change in the individual, a new direction that will lead to heaven. The Evangelist just wets the seed, but there is a lot more growth required before the fruit appears on the stalk. The Evangelist might be a necessary part of the cycle of new life, but so too are others, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

The second condition of man is brought about by daily life, *“that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life”*. Somehow, life takes its toll on the Word of God, and from that bright, exciting first glimpse of the possibilities of life with Christ, there come a gradual returning to the world. It demands too much of us, and we succumb to its pleasures, like Babylon the Great, *Rev 18:8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

You could not tell some Christian services from the clubbing dance floor, messages are coming from the speakers about prosperity, telling you its good to become rich, telling you to live your best life now, healing you so that you can live here forever, a whole ministry of delusion and illusion. What has happened is that these pseudo “Christians” are justifying the “cares, riches and pleasures” of this life, to synthesise a false world which makes us feel good, a world where we have “all this and heaven too”, but it is in reality a lie. There is no fruit from this life.

Then there is the third condition of man in relation to the word, *Luk 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*. It is not just that they hear the word, not simply that they keep the word, not merely that they bring forth fruit, but that they bring forth fruit through persistence, perseverance, patience and endurance. This is the person who makes it his life’s work to develop that word, that seed, until it becomes fruitful.

The seed will do what a seed does best, but the conditions will limit its working. It does not work in spite of us, but is subject to the limitations we put on it. The person who thinks that they are fine by living a Christian life that is just tinkering at the edges, better think again. The seed, the word must grow in him, and that exercise will yield fruit. Where there is little attention to the word, little growth

occurs and you will see this in the life and habits of a Christian and you will see it in the love for Christ.

But who is this parable aimed at? It is not aimed at the first condition of men, they will not believe anything Jesus said and they will not even care. You meet these people going nowhere, life ends and that is it, or they think they are going somewhere else, they just do not have time for God's word. This parable does not change them and I think it is not meant for them.

The second state of men are the "failed but tried group", and no amount of warning will get them to care more for the Gospel and in the end the cares of the world overtake them. They believe for a while but there are more important things to do. I do not see this group responding to the parable. The third group are doing what they should be doing anyway, so they do not need the parable.

There is no advice to any of the three groups, as to how they can change their way of life, how they can be better. These are just observations on men and what happens to them. It does though prepare the disciples for their mission of evangelism.

I think that the parable is not about what you can do to improve your spiritual life or that it is even for the masses. It is for **the disciples**. I say that because the disciples will be the sowers of God's word, mass Evangelism, and they need to have some guidelines.

1. God does not save everybody and you should not be disappointed if they are not saved, it is God's work not yours.
2. People will react to the Gospel differently, some with outright rejection but some will embrace it. Beware of this and you will not be disappointed.
3. Don't be disappointed if some of the professions of faith come to a resounding stop. You must expect it and you will see them start to fall away and there is nothing you can do about it.
4. Always be aware of the fight between good and evil, and that the devil is always going to be involved in what you are doing. It is not plain sailing even though God is on your side, as He is working to a much bigger plan.
5. Don't try and plant genetically modified seed to make the Gospel more attractive. It is already attractive, it is perfect and you cannot improve upon it. You will only spoil the ground by planting a word that God hasn't given.
6. The thorns are there to test the wheat. It is no use you going and clearing the ground, making it more conducive to growth, because it will not work. Making the Gospel "more" attractive is no different than modifying the seed. God didn't tell you to do that.

7. Don't scare satan away, don't scare the birds away. They are not stopping you from sowing, they only affect what happens to the seed, and that is up to God.
8. Do the job you were told to do.

Having given the disciples something to think about, *Luk 8:8 And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* They then put it into practice, *Luk 9:5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.*

59. The lamp under the bed *Luke 8: 16 - 18*

Luk 8:16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. Luk 8:17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Luk 8:18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

The story that Luke is giving, is part of a coherent history, not a patch work quilt of stories, sewn together in a random fashion. By that I mean, he is not getting a whole lot of jumbled stories together and they have no order. There is a purpose in his writing and some of the stories form part of a continuous narrative. For example, we saw with John's disciples, in Luke chapter 7, that their enquiry led to another story that told the Pharisees about dissatisfied children, shouting at each other in the market, which in turn led to another story about the woman who anointed Jesus feet and the Pharisee, showing what children were justified by wisdom. There we see the continuity of the stories.

It is the same here. We have the story of the "sower", followed by an explanation that it is a parable, what a parable is, followed by the story of "the lamp under the bed". They are all connected stories. We usually take this one as a separate story and examine the light under the bed, as referring to all disciples, and it is used of "shining for Jesus", "You in your small corner and I in mine". But I do not think it is and I do not think that it refers to the Christian's general witness.

We have a tendency to read these stories as individual tales and as a result we do not look for a link. We struggle to find a superficial meaning and having found it we are satisfied with that meaning and look no further. We may misinterpret it as a result. We are lazy in our interpretation, our exegesis, and as long as we have an answer, any answer that satisfies us, it is alright.

Look at the verses separated by a non-biblical "heading", *Luk 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the*

*word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. **A Lamp Under a Jar** Luk 8:16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.* Do you see that heading that separates the verses, “**A Lamp Under a Jar**”. It is not in the original scriptures and divides the verses, almost like a full stop.

The two verses have nothing that separates them and the train of thought continues, ... *But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.* The lamp under the bed is inextricably linked with what has gone before, there is continuity of thought. You cannot separate the verses and the story.

Having covered the three classes of men who hear the word in the story of the sower, who is our Lord speaking to now? Is He continuing to speak about these men, continuing with the story of the recipients of the word, or is He speaking to His disciples? I think it is the disciples, and He closes the lesson with the words of warning to the disciples, *Luk 8:18 **Take heed therefore how ye hear:** for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.* The people who are to hear Him are the disciples, in particular the twelve, and those with them.

What are they to hear that is so important that it is given as a conclusion to the parable of the sower? It is this, *Luk 8:16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. Luk 8:17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.*

They may have been disciples at this stage, but they were to be sent out, to become Apostles and it has a bearing on this. They may have been imbibing the teachings of Jesus, learning more by the day, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, growing in the knowledge of Christ, becoming intellectually satisfied by seeing the purpose of the parables, but there was one more thing that they had to see, one more lesson to learn. Jesus could have said, “I am not just telling you these things so that you can become brilliant men, I am telling you these things so that you will use them to help others”.

Jesus may have spoken in parables, but that was to fulfil a prophecy, *Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: Mat 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with*

their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Where does this come from? First a bit of Biblical History, and particularly from the time of Uzziah,

Uzziah took the throne at age 16 and reigned for about 52 years. His reign was "the most prosperous, excepting that of Jehoshaphat, since the time of Solomon." In the earlier part of his reign, under the influence of a prophet named Zechariah, he was faithful to God and "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kings 15:3; 2 Chronicles 26:4-5).

In Jerusalem he made machines designed by skilful men for use on the towers and on the corner defences to shoot arrows and hurl large stones. According to 2 Chronicles 26, Uzziah conquered the Philistines and the Arabians and received tribute from the Ammonites. He fortified the country, organized and equipped the army, and personally engaged in agricultural pursuits. He was a vigorous and able ruler, and "his name spread abroad, even to the entrance of Egypt" (2 Chronicles 26:8-14).

Then his pride led to his downfall. He entered the Temple to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the high priest saw this as an attempt to usurp the prerogatives of the priests and confronted him with a band of eighty priests, saying, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense." (2 Chronicles 26:18). In the meantime a great earthquake shook the ground, and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy (Hebrew: tzaraath) seized upon him immediately (Josephus Flavius, Antiquities IX 10:4). Uzziah was suddenly struck with leprosy before he had offered the incense (2 Chronicles 26:19), and he was driven from the Temple and compelled to reside in "a separate house" until his death (2 Kings 15:5, 27; 2 Chronicles 26:3). The government was turned over to his son Jotham (2 Kings 15:5), a co-regency that lasted for the last 11 years of Uzziah's life (751/750 to 740/739 BC).

He was buried in a separate grave, "in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings" (2 Kings 15:7; 2 Chronicles 26:23). "That lonely grave in the royal necropolis would eloquently testify to coming generations that all earthly monarchy must bow before the inviolable order of the divine will, and that no interference could be tolerated with that unfolding of the purposes of God..." (Dr. Green's Kingdom of Israel).

When king Uzziah died, that very same year, this story of the reason for parables was given, *Isa 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Isa 6:2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.* The Holy presence of God comes to Isaiah with a message:

*Isa 6:8 After this, I heard the LORD ask, "Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?" "I'll go," I answered. "Send me!" Isa 6:9 Then the LORD told me to go and speak this message to the people: "You will listen and listen, but never understand. You will look and look, but never see." The LORD also said, Isa 6:10 **"Make these people stubborn! Make them stop up their ears, cover their eyes, and fail to understand. Don't let them turn to me and be healed."** Isa 6:11 Then I asked the LORD, "How long will this last?" The LORD answered: Until their towns are destroyed and their houses are deserted, until their fields are empty, Isa 6:12 and I have sent them far away, leaving their land in ruins. Isa 6:13 If only a tenth of the people are left, even they will be destroyed. **But just as stumps remain after trees have been cut down, some of my chosen ones will be left.** CEV.*

Uzziah was typical of the nation of Israel, they were like rotten fruit. From good beginnings they went to the dark side, and in consequence the Lord was no longer with the people. It was grim news, for not even a tenth of the people would be left. They would be more than decimated and this was the word for the time of Uzziah. Jesus disciples also had to see that the same word was still applied in their time. The judgement of Isaiah was still going on and that means just **"some of my chosen ones will be left"**, *Luk 13:23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Luk 13:24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

But were the disciples to continue to speak in parables in dark sayings? Paul does not, *Act 20:20 And how **I kept back nothing** that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,Act 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Act 20:27 For **I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.** Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Peter has to change the way he views men, *Act 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is*

*common or unclean. Act 10:15 **And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*** Peter had to see that he had a duty to present the Gospel to all men, and all men are clean including the Romans and so he goes to the house of the Centurion, in Caesarea, and preaches the Gospel to him.

Christianity is not to be an exclusive club for those initiates who have had special training, like the Gnostics, it is open to all. The time of God's silence is at an end, the Gospel will be preached to all, but we have to learn what it is, to become disciples.

If you were told that you had to put your light on a lampstand when you came to Christ, I imagine that it would not have shone very brightly, at first. You had to learn a lot of things before you could adequately reflect the Lord. You were a learner that is what disciple means, and we should probably use that term. We need big "**L**" plates put on us, "L" for learner. But we don't have any discipleship training. It is like getting a powerful car, with a big engine, capable of high speeds, given to us when we become believers. We are let loose on heavens roads without any instruction and we can wreak havoc. We as learners are considered by some in the churches, ministers of the Gospel, as being capable of driving without any instruction.

Our Lord did not think we were capable and so He drew up a learner programme, steering the "learners" through the basics of the faith, then on to the higher mysteries of the faith until they were competent, *1Ti 3:4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 1Ti 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 1Ti 3:6 **Not a novice**, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

To use our driving analogy, we learn to drive the car, not knowing too much about the mechanics, but as we progress, we learn about the hidden things, what goes on under the bonnet, and we may even learn about the physics of motion and the chemistry of combustion. We become competent in handling our vehicle and no longer become just learners, we are good enough to be sent out, that is the meaning of Apostle, we are all ambassadors for Christ.

Did you have any training? Did you undergo discipling? I did not and nearly everyone I know who is a Christian didn't either. Training was for the people who would go into the ministry, the professionals, the upper class of Christians. But this was not so in Jesus days. We can see from the number of disciples, more than the 12, that others could be co-opted to become apostles, *Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.*

The word ἀποστέλλω = apostello, means to send out, hence apostle. So there were more than 12 apostles. There are to be sure, men who are God's gift to His

body the church, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Eph 4:13 **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*** But you will notice that they are given to assist us learners to become competent, to become like them, to come to the “**the stature of the fulness of Christ**”, to become the next generation of Christians.

They have made the “learners”, the disciples, into fully grown people of faith, *Eph 4:14 **That we henceforth be no more children**, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

Now they can go out and make more disciples.

Going back to our text and to Jesus disciples, we have seen that they are not selfishly to keep the teaching to themselves, they are to teach others, they are to spread the teachings of Jesus, they are to be a light. A light is no use if it is hidden from sight. The time had come not to speak in Proverbs but to speak plainly, and with that Jesus finishes His discourse, *Luk 8:17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Luk 8:18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*

It seems to me that “use it or lose it” is a related proverb.

60. A new family *Luke 8: 18 - 21*

Luk 8:19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. Luk 8:20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. Luk 8:21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Mary, His mother and the others of Jesus’ family press in to see Him, but there were too many people for them to break through. The reason why they wanted to see Him is not given and their relationship at that stage is not given, though John gives us an insight in to it, *Joh 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. Joh 7:4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. Joh 7:5 **For neither did his brethren believe in him.***

He had been with His family for enough time for them to see what sort of person He was, but He did not reveal Himself as His time had not yet come. He had a lot of stories surrounding His birth but Mary kept them to herself, *Luk 2:18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. Luk 2:19* **But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.** The future life of her son was going to be a traumatic affair for her and perhaps, being a mother, she only wanted the best for Him, *Luk 2:34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; Luk 2:35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

The family only guessed what sort of person He was to become and He lived an ordinary life for years, and they must have forgotten who this person was. When suddenly, one day He ups and goes on His ministry, to the surprise of all and they could not comprehend it, *Mar 3:20 Jesus went back home, and once again such a large crowd gathered that there was no chance even to eat. Mar 3:21* **When Jesus' family heard what he was doing, they thought he was crazy and went to get him under control.** CEV.

To be fair, I think that the reason His family did not believe Him, was founded in the relationship that they had with Him before He started His Messianic ministry. He was just Jesus to them. He lived an unremarkable life and perhaps the things spoken of Him in earlier days, had been forgotten with time, and they had all settled into their lives, complacently, as if nothing would change and disrupt the peaceful pattern of "sameness". How wrong they were.

What Jesus says to the people is not a rebuke to His family, *Luk 8:21 Jesus answered, "My mother and my brothers are those people who hear and obey God's message."* CEV. It is a statement of fact, and the disciples, the learners, had better get to grips with it. It's a counterbalance to the saying that you "let your shine", for you may not hide your light under a bushel, but likewise you do not treat every man you come across as an equal, like a family member. There is a difference between people and it is important to understand that.

Jesus is telling His "learners" that not only are they entering His Kingdom, but also entering into His family, *Col 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us **into the kingdom of his dear Son:*** That is something we do not think much about, but we should. It makes us brothers and sisters in a very real sense and it cuts off the earthly family at a stroke.

We still have genetic links to our earthly family, but that is all that they are, genetic links and why one set of genes is more important than another, is just a chance brought about by birth. It is the world view which makes for the concept

of a family, and the secular world view is totally different from the Christian world view. The Christian must understand what family means to Jesus.

The secular world view of a family is broadly that it has a set of values which have no foundation in moral absolutes, as they do not, by definition believe in a divine power. Without a “god” any view counts as valid, even though the views they hold may be diametrically opposed. They have a morality which is based upon situation ethics, the morality of convenience. They tolerate all manner of differences in their family and perhaps that is why they cling to their children, in spite of them doing “bad” things, because there is no moral absolute. They say they love them but that too is meaningless.

The Christian comes under a totally different world view, and I do not think that we understand completely what that is. It is not just that we accept Christ as the Creator of the Universe, or that we see Him as the Saviour of the World and that this changes our viewpoint from the secular world view that holds to a universe that created itself, and is a meaningless existence (except some try to give it meaning). The Christian world view also holds to a set of values which point to the nature of the Creator Christ, a written code of conduct. It defines what is right and that implies some things are sinful.

Christ gave man values. He gives a reason to do this or that and without His word there is only confusion. When God came down among men, He confounded their language, their words, because they had rejected Him, *Gen 11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. Gen 11:8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Gen 11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

When man rejects God's values he is doomed. Although all the people were genetically linked, and all had some of Adam in them, it did not do them any good, and rather than become a force to fight God, they all had different languages and could not present a united front to fight Him. As Jesus says, we are two families, and you either hear God or you don't hear God, *Luk 8:21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which **hear the word of God**, and do it*, they are the hearers and the non-hearers, the doers and the non-doers, and genetics count for nothing.

So how are we to treat the new found family of faith and the old family? The answer is, no differently, for we are to treat them exactly the same, *Luk 6:31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Luk 6:32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. Luk 6:33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. Luk 6:34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to*

*sinner, to receive as much again. Luk 6:35 **But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.***

If we develop a “them and us” attitude, a view that we should look down upon the unbelievers, the non-doers of the word, we are wrong. If we look for ways of getting back at the unbeliever for the way they disobey God’s laws and think we are doing God’s work, we are most certainly mistaken and we are wrong. We were once like the people we condemn but God still persevered with us, loved us, and who is to say that they will not be converted? What are we doing to bring them in? Just making ourselves more righteous and them great sinners, continues to widen the divide. Those people who come around the houses, knocking on doors, selling their brand of religion, are they really there to help you, because they love you and see you as lost, or do they just come to make a stand for their own righteousness?

I am not saying that we should make little of sin, or that we diminish the power of sin in the life of an unbeliever, or that we make the things they do lesser crimes than they are. But who will be around to tell them of it, if we don’t want to talk to them, because we want to maintain our purity? We are just like the Pharisees, self-righteous hypocrites, who do not spend enough time looking at their own sins and too much time looking at the sins of other people.

The hypocrisy of men can be seen in their attitude that say God is on our side. Really? Men fought and killed each other with the motto “God with us” inscribed upon their belt buckles. Did God tell them that if they saw a person doing wrong, the best thing they could do in the circumstances was to blow his brains out, burn him at the stake, walk by on the other side so that you could avoid him? No, He did not, in fact He said just the opposite, *Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Mat 5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*

We have too much of Moses in us and not enough of Christ, we have hard hearts not fleshly hearts.

When Jesus says, *Luk 8:21 My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.* He is making an observation about His people, not His mother and His brothers and sisters. He is saying that if the people who say they are His, who claim to be heavenly children are really so, then they will show it by “hearing” the word and, note this for it is most important, they will be “doing” the word. It is one thing to hear the word, and I am sure that those who

go to a church, do hear it from week to week. But doing the word is another matter.

This is what brings reformation about. It brings reformation of character and reformation of the Church. It separates the wheat from the chaff, it separates godliness from hypocrisy. Reformation of the Church without reformation of the individuals is hypocrisy. Calvin was a reformer and he was a murderer, so how do you square that. Calvin and many others need reforming on the inside.

King Asa of Judah was a reformer. He was the son of Abijam, the son of Rehoboam. *1Ki 15:9 And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. 1Ki 15:10 And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 1Ki 15:11 And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. 1Ki 15:12 And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. 1Ki 15:13 And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. 1Ki 15:14 But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.*

It was not a perfect reformation but the king Asa had a perfect heart and he made a start, and we in every generation must review our father's works and not accept them without proving them. After all, this is what Jesus is saying, *Luk 8:21 My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.* It is not the tradition of your father's which is automatically right, *Luk 11:46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Luk 11:47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Luk 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.* It is the word of God not the word of our fathers that we must do.

I saw some of the Queen's platinum jubilee celebration the other day, in particular the service in St Paul's cathedral. There was all the pomp and hypocrisy of the nation, pretending to believe in Christ, honouring Him by dressing up in ancient robes and costumes, finely and ornately decorated. A service choreographed for a nation, all the players nodding and bowing as if they believed what they were doing but it did not have any meaning other than that which they gave it. And I thought, that all that dressing up, all that mumbo jumbo invented by men, all the visible things that they had, were not given by the God of the Bible. He did not ask for them, only that they would do the word of God and follow Christ.

It was all a visible religion, all man centred and it will all be burnt up, and then what is left of the worship? Where is Jesus honoured by this people, where is His people ? *Luk 8:21 My mother and my brethren are these which hear the*

word of God, and do it. This is another reference to to good seed, *Luk 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

I bet you were all thinking, I'm one of the seeds that fell on good ground, I produce fruit, so what do I need this teaching for? What do I need the teaching about Jesus mother and brethren for, I hear the word? Are you sure, do you really hear it or is it just selective hearing? Do you follow the herd, follow what men teach, follow man's church, man's tradition and still claim to hear Jesus? You can claim to hear and do what Jesus said, only if you with a true and honest heart follow Him, not men.

The world drowns Him out. We suddenly find that we are following men, following the band and not discerning that Christ is not leading the procession.

In Jesus family, the follower follow Him, and Him alone, not just hearing the word but also doing it, and are counted as His mother and His brethren. The genetic relationship counts for nothing, since we have a new genome, new DNA, a heavenly birth, a new kingdom, we are different. We should not forget that, but at the same time we should not forget where we came from and what we were.

We must have compassion on the lost, seek them for the sake of Jesus, love them, as He said, *Luk 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

61. The storm *Luke 8: 22 - 25*

Luk 8:22 Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. Luk 8:23 But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. Luk 8:24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. Luk 8:25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

"The Sea of Galilee is a fresh-water inland lake a little more than 12 miles long and seven miles wide. The



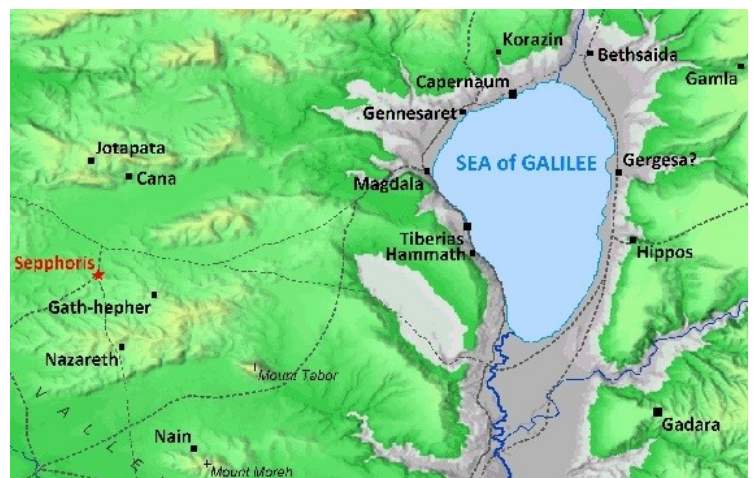
Jordan River flows through it, from north to south, on its way to the Dead Sea. The western shores of the Sea of Galilee are about 12 to 15 miles from Nazareth, where Jesus spent His boyhood years, so it is likely He was familiar with the sea and its neighbouring hills. Being about 680 feet below sea level, the body of water becomes quite warm during certain times. Cold air rushing down from the sharply rising hills meets the warm air rising from the water. The result is a sudden and violent storm.”

It is probable that it was such a storm that arose when Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee. On this day, Jesus and His disciples are going across the lake to the eastern region of Decapolis, the 10 Hellenistic Gentile states, and in particular to the state of Gadara. The storm breaks upon the little fishing boat but Jesus sleeps through it until He is awoken by the clamouring of the disciples who fear that they will perish.

It is another lesson for the learners as to who Jesus is and it shows that they still had little faith in Him. If Jesus had asked His disciples if they wanted to come for a boat trip, they could have asked where to? Jesus could have told them, “well, after we have gone through the most terrifying storm imaginable, we are going to meet a couple of demon possessed madmen of the worst sort and then we’ll come back”. You can hear the shuffling feet, the excuses and the apology “no thanks, we’ll wait here for you to come back but we are not going”. How kind is the Lord not to tell us what is coming.

This story, is I feel, another attempt to get us to look back into the OT. So much of what Jesus does is related to the OT and as He came to fulfil the Law, I would expect to see Him in the Books of the OT, but also to explain it to us. In looking back into that past we see an event which mirrors this one, parallels it but at the same time, there is an antithesis to it. I refer of course to an event which we all know concerning Jonah.

Jonah son of Amittai the prophet (יוֹנָה בֶּן-אֲמִתַּי הַנְּבִיא), was from Gath-Hepher, a town in Galilee about 2 miles northeast of Nazareth. Gath Hepher was in the territory allotted to the tribe of Zebulun (see Josh 19:10, 13), so it is likely Jonah was a member of that tribe. Two miles from Nazareth puts Jonah as a neighbour of Jesus although in an earlier time. The region of Galilee, in the time of Jonah was in the territory of Israel, not Judah, the northern 10 tribes of Israel as opposed to the one tribe of Judah.



Jonah is a type of Christ, and perhaps the Galilean connection underscores that, *Mat 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but **the sign of the prophet Jonas**: Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was **three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** Mat 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

As Jonah himself, by his very life, was a living sign to his generation, so was Jesus to His, *Luk 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. Luk 11:30 For **as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.** Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Luk 11:32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

Two signs were given by Jesus, and both come from events in Jonah's life. One sign was that our Lord was to be in the grave for three days and three nights and the other was that the sign to this generation, as afterwards Jonah had been to Nineveh. Jonah the lesser gave to Christ the greater.

In his day Jonah gave a prophecy that Israel would be saved, and the land of Israel would return to the boundaries of Solomon. *2Ki 14:23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. 2Ki 14:24 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 2Ki 14:25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher. 2Ki 14:26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. 2Ki 14:27 **And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.***

Whether this act of favour shown to Israel, despite their bad kings, prompted a wave of nationalism into which Jonah was swept up and caused his anti-Gentile feelings to rise in the face of a Divine request to show clemency to Nineveh, is

not known. The equanimity with which God deals with Israel and Nineveh is an affront to the sensitivities of the Jew Jonah, which is where we take up our story.

Jonah, like Jesus, has been ministering in the region of Galilee, and embarks on a sea journey. Jesus has just been ministering to a multitude of Jews and left them with the statement about who are His true brethren, then He gets in a boat to go over the lake to the Gentiles, and promptly falls soundly asleep in the stern of the ship. Jonah does not want to go to the Gentiles, and he too gets in a boat and falls into a deep sleep. During their journeys a great storm arises, a tempest, and the boats are pounded by the waves. Let us read the Scripture, *Jon 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Jon 1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. Jon 1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. Jon 1:4 But the LORD sent out **a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Jon 1:5 Then **the mariners were afraid**, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and **was fast asleep**. Jon 1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, **that we perish not**.***

There are, as I said similarities that tie the stories together but there are also differences. There are enough similarities that we are drawn to the story of Jonah as being a parallel, yet some of the things do not fit with the NT story.

The parallels are striking, the great tempest on the sea, the scared mariners, the ship sinking in the waters, the sleeper undisturbed by the storm, the cry “carest thou not that we perish” by the occupants of the vessel and the calming of the storm, are all similarities in the narratives. Both men sleep; the sleep of the just, giving us the impression that they are both comfortable in what they are doing. But what about the differences?

Jonah is a disobedient rebel, whereas Jesus does only those things which please His father. Jonah heads as far away from the Gentiles as is physically possible but Jesus steers a course directly to them. Jonah is cast into the sea to still the tempest but Jesus speaks to the storm. The disciples are fearful and their lack of faith is rebuked but the mariners on Jonah’s boat fear God and offer sacrifice.

It seems to be two stories which do not quite meet, they seem to be “topsy turvy” to us, all about face. But then, the story of Jonah is happening before the Kingdom of God came in and that may be a clue as to why there are these differences.

The answer may be found at the end of the Book of Jonah, when God speaks, that is when Jesus speaks, for this is God with us, *Jon 4:10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: Jon 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?* Jonah bore the hatred of a hard heart, a vengeful heart in which all that was contrary to the law was nestled. He did not love ALL men but was partial. He did not love God aright, for he only saw God glorified in Israel, not in the whole world.

The Lord had a lesson to teach him, The Lord is the God of the storms, literal and metaphorical, *Jon 1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.* He is the Lord who can calm as well as cause, *Mat 8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.* Both the sailors and the disciples, the learners, have a similar attitude when it comes to faith in God. They only go so far, as far as they can see, but do not trust the Lord to do right. The learners and the sailors all lack faith and all lack obedience.

They are all about the physical salvation, “save us we perish”, they have their eye upon the earth, they cannot say, “Ah well, if we die it is no matter, for we go to be with the Lord”. It makes you wonder what they thought, and like so many Christians, they are ill-prepared to go with Jesus to Glory, milking each moment of this life, staving off heaven until their last desperate moment. They are “little faith’s”, little knowledge of the Saviour, little knowledge of the Scriptures, but they will grow in time and they will be great men.

The events in the lives of the “learners” are all being carefully choreographed. Each purposeful step is laid out for their benefit, to grow them, *Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:* These wonderful stories are not for our entertainment, to satisfy us, to fill us with knowledge. They are all designed to transform us into Christ and if we do not see them as changing us, what are they for?

They are for that purpose, and we had better heed the words of Jesus, *Luk 8:25 And he said unto them, **Where is your faith?** And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.*

Like Jonah who was swallowed by the fish and spat out on the shore, so Jesus when He had called the waves to be still arrived at shore and are met with a madman. Can things get even worse?

62. The confrontation with devils *Luke 8: 26 - 29*

Luk 8:26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. Luk 8:27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. Luk 8:28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. Luk 8:29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

I include a few verses from Matthew, *Mat 8:28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*

Some journey, some landing and there to welcome Him are madmen. There are apparently two men, but Luke picks up on the conversation with one of them. He comes to the land of the Gentiles, Decapolis and instead of being welcomed as He was in the Jewish towns, He is met by devils. Instead of passing by them, ignoring the demon possessed, the unclean man, He straightway opens a conversation with them.

I point out that this is another difference between Jonah and Christ. Whereas Jonah takes his message and preaches to Gentile Nineveh successfully, causing them to repent, Jesus is not given the same success. In fact this very short foray into Gentile territory takes about a day and then He returns to the other side of the lake again. There is one left behind to evangelise, namely the healed man, and Jesus must have felt that the man knew enough about the works of the devil, to successfully conduct a Gospel ministry in His absence.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Why is there the demon oppressed that greet Jesus? I again go back into the OT to try and answer this, and I go to the Book of Daniel.

Dan 4:29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth,



there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

What ailment was it that afflicted this king? Boanthropy is a psychological disorder in which the sufferer believes he or she is a cow or ox. Clinical lycanthropy is defined as a rare psychiatric syndrome that involves a delusion that the affected person can transform into, has transformed into, or is, an animal. Its name is associated with the mythical condition of lycanthropy, a supernatural affliction in which humans are said to physically shapeshift into wolves. Was it either of these or were these the symptoms of demon possession?

Nebuchadnezzar certainly had lost his reason and one could say he was no longer human, no longer in possession of his faculties. It seems to me that there is a lot in common with these people who deny reality in today's world, where men are called woman and women men, *Rom 1:28 Because those people refuse to keep in mind the true knowledge about God, he has given them over to corrupted minds, so that they do the things that they should not do.* GNB. One sign of being mentally ill is losing control of the world around you, and that is an act of God, *Deu 28:28 The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:*

Nebuchadnezzar would not humble himself and show mercy to the poor, and the king who had a golden kingdom is brought down to the dust, *Dan 4:27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.* Then he is brought to his senses, then like the Gaderene he is delivered of his madness, and this is what he says,

Dan 4:34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: an 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Dan 4:36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Dan 4:37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and

honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

The Gaderene man is a metaphor for the Gentiles and Jews, for all that they strived for, and from a magnificent start they degenerated, like the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, *Dan 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Dan 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, Dan 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Dan 2:34 Thou sawest till that **a stone was cut out without hands**, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.*

Here is Christ, confronting the remnant of that Kingdom of the nations, restoring it to its rightful mind, the stone "cut out without hands" bringing the works of the devil to account, *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

This I think, is the import of this story, why Jesus set sail for the land of the Gentiles, and why he is confronted with the Gadarene. Let us look even closer at the condition of this man.

Luk 8:27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs

Mar 5:3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Mar 5:4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. Mar 5:5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones..... Mar 5:9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.



Figure 3 The land of Gadara on the East of lake Galilee

The man is not possessed by a single demon, but by a hoard, by a legion of demons. Perhaps he is the scapegoat for the village, perhaps he has become the focus for all the demonic activity, and they have as it were accumulated in him, the evil of them all? There is a precedent, for demons do congregate in places which seem well suited for them, as Christ says, *Luk 11:24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. Luk 11:25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Luk 11:26 Then goeth he, and taketh **to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself**; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

He focuses the power of darkness, incapable of being held by men, a giant among men, like Samson when it came to removing the chains they put about him, *Jdg 15:14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, **and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.** Jdg 15:15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.*

The Gadarene was fearsome and strong and you did not want to meet him on a dark night. He lived in a graveyard and was the dead among the dead. He is a barrier between the Gentile peoples and the life giving Saviour. He was the stuff of horror movie films and nightmares.

Everything about this man speaks of the nations for they were bound with fetters and chains, naked and with no abode, living lives among the dead, *Mar 5:5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* The nations were spiritually summed up in this man as the living dead, *Rev 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: Rev 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

This demon possessed man goes out to meet Jesus and falls down before Him, drawn to ask Him a question, *Luk 8:28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, **torment me not**.....Mar 5:7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that **thou torment me not**.....Mat 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to **torment us before the time?***

We learn that it is a multitude of demons in one man and they are afraid of Jesus and concerned that He does not torment them, and that before their time of

torment. The man is a hostage to these demons and they are stronger than him, and the man himself can do nothing about it. He cannot even speak or show his personality, so consumed is he by the demons.

I have wondered whether the gradual silencing of a human soul by that dreadful disease, Alzheimer's, is like the possession of the soul, or even is demonic. The personality is barged aside, no longer visible to the world, and the victim is dumb, held at bay by dumb demons. Unable to function until released by Jesus and it is to all intents and purposes a dead soul.

The purpose of demons is to destroy the image of God, to kill mankind so that they will no longer be able to have a Saviour, and be forever in the darkness of hell separated from God. There is not one bit of kindness in the devil, not one bit of care for mankind. Having fooled man into falling from grace, there is now the final capture of man, by death, and that is all satan is interested in. Look at what he does to man and you will see it is never good and he encourages all the works of the flesh, *Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

The devil de-personalises man, makes him less human, and the thing is, man doesn't see it. You tell scientists, doctors, nurses, teachers, policemen, politicians etc., that the devil is in control of them and you are likely to get locked up as being mad, but that is the truth of it. The Bible says that all men follow the devil until Christ confronts them. To a greater or lesser degree, all men are possessed or oppressed in some way, *Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:* The devil is between us and Christ and we can see this most vividly with this man of Gadara. What stops a man from becoming a Christian is the devil.

He is lost to God, the demons blot his personality out, but when Jesus appears and casts out the "legion" of satan, the man is back in control and in his right mind. And notice this, he does not need persuading of Christ, and without the devil in him he is all too willing to embrace the Christ. The only thing stopping men from embracing Christ is the devil, remove the devil and you can receive the Christ. This is the ground we should fight on, to release the captives from satan, then having overcome him there is no problem in receiving Jesus. The Gadarene was released from satan.

Why was there so much demon possession in Jesus day? There was no more than today, only today it is not a subject we talk about. We have relegated it to psychosomatic illness treatable with drugs, but Jesus recognised who He was

fighting against, know your enemy, and because we do not know the enemy, we are in a position of weakness. Thanks be to God that He has given us the weapons to fight the devil.

There is something else that we learn about demons from this narrative and that is that they know their downfall is coming because they say, "Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to **torment us before the time?**" They are sensitive to their own limitations, sensitive to torment, they know it is coming but do not know exactly when. These creatures are damaging everything around them, insensitive to the plight of mankind but are sensitive to their own destruction and know that it is coming but that there is nothing they can do about it

Have you ever thought about how these demons are around you, that smiling friend, the good natured boss, that person in the sports club, your kindly neighbour, your wife, your husband, your children, all working against your faith. We are in a battle.

63. The Gentile apostle *Luke 8: 30 - 37*

Luk 8:30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. Luk 8:31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. Luk 8:32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Luk 8:33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. Luk 8:34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Luk 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. Luk 8:36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Luk 8:37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

I like to search the scripture in order to find a parallel with the events here in Luke's Gospel. I feel it could give an interpretation of the passage, and I find one in Isaiah towards the end of the book.

*Isa 65:1 I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. Isa 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; Isa 65:3 **A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Isa***

65:4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Isa 65:5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

The Gentiles who did not look for God found Him, and Paul gives his comment on that passage, *Rom 10:20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. Rom 10:21 **But to Israel he saith,** All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

That speaks of the Jews, who have been rebellious and despite God calling them by His Name, holding His hands out to them they have become an irritant, smoke in His nose. They have provoked Him to anger continually, they “**remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels**”.

Isaiah speaks of two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles and both historically are saved, although it is only a remnant of both nations, *Rom 11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Rom 11:18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Rom 11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Rom 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:* Notice that this passage follows on from Paul's comment in chapter 10 on Isaiah's prophecy.

The olive tree Paul speaks of is an example of the history of redemption. It is a metaphor for Israel, spiritual Israel and grows from before the beginning of the nation of Israel. We can see that unbelief caused some branches to be cast out. It was therefore a tree of the believers in Israel. In the process of time, the Gentiles are also redeemed, and this is shown by the grafting in of the Gentiles. Jews and Greeks, have the same, in terms of the benefits of Christ, *Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Now we may just have an understanding of why Matthew records that there were two demoniacs. Could they have been Jew and Greek? Could they have been from different nations, both taken hostage by demons, both freed by Christ? This is a lesson in the Gospel, that Jew and Gentile are brought together by the action of Christ defeating satan.

The pigs are singled out as anti-kosher and so people give the pigs a hard time. But pigs were not unclean while they were alive, neither were any other animals. They were only unclean when dead. You could if you wanted keep unclean

animals, you could have a piggy as a pet if you wanted. This article by Daniel Berchie makes it clear,

In view of the biblical kosher law of clean and unclean animals, the question of whether unclean animals could be reared or not in Ancient Israel becomes an ecological concern (Lev. 7:21; 11:26) for religious bodies today who still consider certain animals as unclean. A theological study of the law in the Pentateuch suggests that, in Ancient Israel, unclean animals were well catered for. Physical contact with live unclean animals did not render one unclean. Rather, uncleanness could be acquired through the touching of the carcass of clean or unclean animals, *Lev 11:39 If an animal that may be eaten happens to die, and you touch it, you become unclean until evening. Lev 11:40 If you eat any of its meat or carry its body away, you must wash your clothes, but you are still unclean until evening.*

As part of their stewardship ordained by God (Gen. 1:26), the people of Israel touched and reared/cared for unclean animals. Amongst other things, analysis of Genesis 1, *Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

The Hebrew text, indicates that the primary purpose of human creation, as cosmic stewards over all creatures (including unclean animals), is underlined. Hence, contemporary religious bodies, who still consider certain animals as unclean, should have an unfeigned care and positive attitude towards all unclean animals.

So if it were not for uncleanness, why were the pigs chosen for the demons? Remember the prodigal son, *Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. Luk 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* The pigs were considered the lowest of the low in terms of animal husbandry, and keeping them was also a very poor profession. I would suggest that the pigs were a suitable habitation of demons, because of their association with the lowest form of life. Pigs and demons were well suited to each other.

The demons made a request of Jesus, *Luk 8:31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.* Not command them to go into deep water but send them into the abyss (ἄβυσσος = abussos = abyss, deep, bottomless pit). The abyss is a place of restraint, *Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of Heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain on his hand. Rev 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent who is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, Rev 20:3 and threw him into*

the abyss, and shut him up, and sealed over him, that he should not still lead astray the nations, until the thousand years are fulfilled. And after these things, he must be set loose a little time. LITV.

The demons did not want their activities restrained, and they ask permission to go into the herd of pigs, instead of the abyss, which is granted. It seems strange that Jesus would even have a rational conversation with the devil, that He would allow him to be granted a request, but that is because we do not know the purpose of God, and that satan is just one of God's created tools. *Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.*

Luk 8:33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. We do not know what happened to the demons after this time, whether they went on to torment other poor souls, but we see that they needed a living host to do their evil work, and that they are only moved on.

Peace prevails and we now see the aftermath of that great exorcism. The man (men) are now seated at the feet of Jesus, returned to themselves, and we can only suppose what fear they had been held in, doing things they did not want to do, until they are bought back, freed of the demons. It is only when we are totally free in Jesus that we can know what it is to be held in bondage.

What was he like before the devils came? The man that Luke concentrates on has had devils "a long time" and so I assume that there was a time when he was not possessed. Then one day he started to become a man who lost his reason, gradually or suddenly, until he was a shadow of himself and the full manifestation of evil overtook him. The demons for some reason accumulated in him until they were a legion. Why they did not distribute themselves in the population is not known, why they accumulated in him is a mystery.

We are not told his name, his nationality, his age, his profession, like so many of these people we have in our stories. They are lost to us, so why some are not recorded and others are is not given, *Mar 10:46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.*

I speculate that he was the first Gentile sent to take the Gospel to this region. He was an apostle to the Gentiles, before Paul, *Gal 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)* I would like to think that this was actually Luke, a Hellenistic or Greek believer who eventually writes a history of the Gospel.

Is this farfetched? *Luk 1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Luk*

1:2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; Luk 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, Luk 1:4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

The key word is *eyewitnesses*, which in Greek is αὐτόπτης = *autoptais*, *self seeing*, (v. 2). Today we get the word *autopsy* from it. However, in Luke's preface it is not a medical term, nor does it have a legal meaning per se, but a historiographical one (history writing). It means those who are **first hand observers**. It seems incredible then in the face of that men say,

The four canonical gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were all composed within the Roman Empire between 70 and 110 C.E (± five to ten years) as biographies of Jesus of Nazareth. Written a generation after the death of Jesus (ca. 30 C.E), **none of the four gospel writers were eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus.**

The Bible says au contraire “**from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word**” so these people do not even believe the writings of Luke. Why should we accept anything they say when commenting upon it?

My point is, that if Luke is an *autoptais*, an eyewitness, so where and when does he join the disciples? We don't know for certain and so its open for speculation. Is the man of Gadara, the disciple of Jesus, really Luke, the first Apostle of the Gentiles, the man with no name? Luke according to the Eastern Orthodox tradition was one of the 70 disciples that Jesus sent out.

Why does he not say so? This would be fairly obvious, as he is writing about someone else and not about himself, besides, such a revelation about the author might detract from the story of Jesus. But this is speculation.

What is not speculation is what happens to the man, *Luk 8:38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Luk 8:39 **Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee.** And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.*

The man is a better testimony to Jesus, where he lives, where his people can see the change in him, the before and after effect. Mark says that the man went further than the city and preached in the whole Decapolis, and that Jesus had compassion upon him. Your personal witness will have more power if people you know see a change in your life, not for the few moments you are talking religion, but seeing you consistently living up to Christ's standards. That impresses people. That a man can be so thoroughly changed, changed in his way of thinking, changed in his manner of life is cause for reflection. He shows a new birth, a new beginning, a new creature.

In all of this, the rest of the disciples, the learners, are silent, still recovering from the tempest, still coming to terms with Jesus commanding the storm to cease, and now having seen the power over demons, what can they say? They are silenced by what Jesus has done and so should the world be.

64. 12 years *Luke 8:40 - 42*

Luk 8:40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. Luk 8:41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: Luk 8:42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

(Luk 8:43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Luk 8:44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. Luk 8:45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? Luk 8:46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. Luk 8:47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. Luk 8:48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.)

Luk 8:49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. Luk 8:50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole Luk 8:51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. Luk 8:52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. Luk 8:53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. Luk 8:54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. Luk 8:55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. Luk 8:56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Mark uses a number of different literary techniques to present his account of the life of Jesus. One of these techniques has become known as the 'Markan Sandwich'. This is the technique whereby Mark interrupts a story with what

appears to be an unrelated story. For example the healing of Jairus' daughter is interrupted with the healing of the lady with the haemorrhage. The healing of the woman with the flow of blood is the filling in the sandwich.¹

This may be literary device but I do not think that Luke is using it. I believe he has brought the two events together because they are related. The two women are bound by a thread of time, to be precise 12 years. The stories are simultaneous, in fact one encompasses another, therefore they are entwined together as one.

They are both daughters, a daughter of the ruler of the Synagogue and a daughter of Abraham, *Luk 8:41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: Luk 8:42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him..... Luk 8:47 And when the woman saw that she did not escape notice, she came trembling and falling down before him. In the presence of all the people, she told for what reason she had touched him, and that she was healed immediately. Luk 8:48 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace.*

One household rejoiced at the birth of a daughter, 12 years before and another was just starting on the path of suffering at the same time. How insensitive we are to the world when we are joyful, but how we want the world's sympathy when we are troubled. *Rom 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* That poor woman who was to endure suffering, lacking competent physicians had no recourse but to God, and fell upon his mercy. She had few friends because she had "an issue of blood" and that made her ritually unclean and so to all intents she was an outcast in Israel.

¹ Markan Sandwiches appear in the following locations. Mark 3:20-35; 4:1-20; 5:21-43; 6:7-30; 11:12-21; 14:1-11; 14:17-31; 14:53-72; 15:40-16:8.



How were these events coupled by the number 12? I think that the number 12 symbolises is Israel, the 12 patriarchs, the fathers of a nation, and there is much evidence of this sacred number in scripture, and is finally seen in the heavenly Jerusalem in the 12 gates, the 12 foundations and the twelve trees for the healing of Nations.

The suffering of the woman is taking us to the suffering of Israel, and that suffering is under the OT, the nation suffering the continual sacrifices of blood, and that did not cleanse the soul, *Heb 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

Jairus' daughter takes us to the Old Covenant in Israel, which must die but which must be raised from the dead in Christ. It was written that Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, was effectively killed at the beginning of the world, *Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* And yes, that says that everyone will worship him, even the unbelievers.

The death of the Messiah was made clear to the people of the OT, *Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: **he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter**, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. Isa 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. Isa 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

The death of Christ is clear from the Old Testament, the resurrection of Christ is not so clear. I let William Craig explain the matter to us,

Once the disciples came to believe in Jesus' resurrection, then they could go to the Scriptures looking for verses to validate their belief and experience, and passages like Jonah and the whale and Psalm 16.10 could be re-interpreted in light of Jesus' resurrection. But to think that the belief in Jesus' resurrection was derived from the Old

Testament is to put the cart before the horse; it gets things exactly backwards.

The difficulty is that when we ask, “What Scriptures are they thinking of?” we come up with sparse results. Hosea 6.2 — *“After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him”*—has been suggested because it mentions the “third day” motif found in the old formula cited by Paul. But Hosea 6.2 is never explicitly cited by any New Testament author, much less applied to Jesus’ resurrection. In the apostolic sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, we find Psalm 16.10 interpreted in terms of Jesus’ resurrection: *“For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit.”* But if we look at the principal Old Testament passage cited in the Gospels with respect to Jesus’ resurrection, we find the story of Jonah and the whale. *“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matthew 12.40).

Now the problem for the theory in question is that nobody, especially a first century Jew, reading the story of Jonah and the whale would think that this has anything whatsoever to do with Jesus’ burial and resurrection! Similarly for Psalm 16.10; this has to do with David’s confidence that God will not allow him to see defeat and death. And as for Hosea 6.2, this has nothing to do with resurrection of the dead but with the restoration of the national fortunes of Israel.

The point is that no one *who did not already have a belief in Jesus’ resurrection* would find in these Scriptures any impetus to think that Jesus had been raised from the dead. To this we may add the fact that in Jewish belief the resurrection of the dead was always an event at the end of the world involving all the people, an event which obviously had not yet taken place. The problem many people, even some scholars, have is not being able to put themselves in the shoes of a first century Jew confronted with Jesus’ crucifixion—they tend to look at the disciples’ situation through the rear view mirror of 2,000 years of Christian theology, and so the idea of his rising from the dead seems natural to them, when in fact it is an anachronism.

Once the disciples came to believe in Jesus’ resurrection, then they could go to the Scriptures looking for verses to validate their belief and experience, and passages like Jonah and the whale and Psalm 16.10 could be re-interpreted in light of Jesus’ resurrection. **But to think that the belief in Jesus’ resurrection was derived from the Old Testament is to put the cart before the horse; it gets things exactly backwards.**

The resurrection was not clear from the OT, but for those who would be disciples, it becomes clearer, especially as Jesus shows it in His healings. It is to be sure a real sticking point with them, *Mar 16:14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.* In fact it would become and is a sticking point today. Did Jesus rise from the dead?

Paul acknowledges the problem, *1Co 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 1Co 15:13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 1Co 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 1Co 15:15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 1Co 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 1Co 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain;*

Jesus says to Jairus' daughter, *Mar 5:41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.* Talitha is a term of endearment. It is etymologically related to a word that can also mean "lamb." Jesus' use of this term, coupled with His taking the little girl by the hand, provides an image of a compassion and gentleness. The Good Shepherd is lovingly gathering the lambs in His arms, *Isa 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* My little lamb," He says to her as He restores her life, "it's time to get up." If He could raise others He could raise Himself as He has power over death.

As His ministry unfolds, the shadows become clearer and eventually the substance is in plain sight. The Kingdom of God becomes clearer, and the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, fades from view and the New Covenant enters.

The Law though is not done away by Christ, it is fulfilled in Christ and we are in-lawed to Christ, *1Co 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

Notice the words *ἄνομος* = anomos = lawless (without law) and *ἐννομος* = ennomos = in-lawed (under the law) that stand in contrast to one another. Paul is saying that to the Jews he was a Jew when it came to talking things of the law, and he put himself under that code of practice. To the Gentile who was without the law, or lawless, he became as one with them, not using the precepts of the law. But Paul never forgot his relationship with Christ, and the he was bound to Him, in-lawed to Him.

The Contemporary English Version puts it nicely, *1Co 9:20 When I am with the Jews, I live like a Jew to win Jews. They are ruled by the Law of Moses, and I am not. But I live by the Law to win them. 1Co 9:21 And when I am with people who are not ruled by the Law, I forget about the Law to win them. Of course, I never really forget about the law of God. In fact, I am ruled by the law of Christ.* CEV.

So, as one daughter dies, another is healed, and a former tragedy for one family becomes a joyful occasion, and the joy for the other family becomes a tragedy. But both are healed to the praise of God. However, in Christ, it all works to good for those that love the Lord, and although the healings did not last forever in this life, the two women carried the tokens of the next life with them, that they had been with Jesus. They were chosen women who had enacted the parable of the Nation of Israel, they had suffered, one for 12 years, so that you and I in another age might see this. I think we should seek them out in the Kingdom and thank them profusely for what they had gone through to teach us a lesson.

Luk 8:55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. Luk 8:56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

65. Power and Authority *Luke 9: 1 - 6*

*Luk 9:1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them **power** and **authority** over all devils, and to cure diseases. Luk 9:2 And he sent them to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. **Luk 9:3** And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. Luk 9:4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. Luk 9:5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. Luk 9:6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.*

The disciples are deemed ready to go out and preach the Kingdom. They have been with Jesus and they know enough to get people into the Kingdom but not enough not to betray Christ, and they still have much to learn. But it is enough for the task in hand for now.

Among the **powers** Jesus gave them was the power over devils. Notice that He gave them **authority** as well. Power is defined as the ability or potential of an individual to influence others and control their actions. Authority is the legal and formal right to give orders and commands, and take decisions. The word for “authority” is often, and confusingly rendered “power” in the KJV, and should be corrected, such as, *Luk 5:24 But that ye may know that the Son of man **hath power** upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.* There it is authority

not power, as in, *Luk 5:24 But that you may know that the Son of Man **has authority** on the earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise up, and take your cot and go to your house.* LITV.

Authority is defined in, *Rom 13:1 Obey the rulers who have **authority** over you. Only God can give **authority** to anyone, and he puts these rulers in their places of **power**.* *Rom 13:2 People who oppose the authorities are opposing what God has done, and they will be punished.* *Rom 13:3 Rulers are a threat to evil people, not to good people. There is no need to be afraid of the authorities. Just do right, and they will praise you for it.* *Rom 13:4 After all, they are God's servants, and it is their duty to help you. If you do something wrong, you ought to be afraid, because these rulers have the right to punish you. They are God's servants who punish criminals to show how angry God is.* *Rom 13:5 But you should obey the rulers because you know it is the right thing to do, and not just because of God's anger.* *Rom 13:6 You must also pay your taxes. The authorities are God's servants, and it is their duty to take care of these matters.* *Rom 13:7 Pay all that you owe, whether it is taxes and fees or respect and honour.* CEV.

There we see authority as a sovereign gift of God to rulers, who in turn exercise power over the people. The divine right of Kings was partially correct but did the kings possess the power? The difference between power, the ability to do something and authority, the right to do it, is seen in the story of the people who come to Jesus with their works, but with no authority backing them up, giving them a warrant to do these things, *Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

As Christians, we rush out and try to imitate the apostles and early disciples, without even asking the Lord if we can go. We do not ask the Lord of the harvest if it is time to reap, where we should go to reap and above all for the power and authority to reap or do anything for the Lord. It seems only common courtesy that one should wait for the call as one of old did, *Isa 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

Now does the command to the twelve extend to the power and authority being given to all disciples? If Mark is anything to go by, yes, it is, *Mar 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* *Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* *Mar 16:17 And these signs **shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils;** they shall speak with new tongues; *Mar 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**

The Corinthian church, the Gentile church, is awash with gifts, but there is no mention of “exorcism”, devil expulsion, perhaps for the reason that these were gifts for the body of believers. Believers do not get possessed. That does not mean that demon possession was not an issue in the wider Gentile and Jewish community of the unbeliever. Corinth was near to Ephesus, *Act 19:1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus:* and there was a problem with demons in Ephesus.

The fact that people were using the Name of Jesus to get rid of demons after the resurrection shows the power of Christ had spread far and wide and was still valid. It had reached as far as Ephesus, and that this exorcism was practiced among the Jews of the dispersion, *Act 19:13 Some Jewish men started going around trying to force out evil spirits by using the name of the Lord Jesus. They said to the spirits, "Come out in the name of that same Jesus that Paul preaches about!" Act 19:14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this, Act 19:15 when an evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus! And I have heard about Paul. But who are you?" Act 19:16 Then the man with the evil spirit jumped on them and beat them up. They ran out of the house, naked and bruised.*

I can see no reason why believers do not get this ability to cast out demons, but I do not think everybody possesses this gift, any more than all possess the ability to work miracles, *1Co 12:29 They are not all apostles or prophets or teachers. Not everyone has the power to work miracles 1Co 12:30 or to heal diseases or to speak in strange tongues or to explain what is said.* GNB. Some do however. The signs follow believers but not all believers have the same signs.

Casting out demons is a most important gift and sign. We tend to think of a person who is not in Christ as being a little different, deprived of knowledge, poor wretched creatures who have not yet found the grace of God. They are seen as little different from us but this is a gross error. They are the children of the devil as I will show. But if the devil was in everyman, why did not Jesus cast out devils from every man? There are some points to make clear on this subject.

The sick that Jesus ministered to were mainly Jews, and Galilean Jews at that. They were believers in the Kingdom and had repented of their ways in preparation for the Kingdom. I think that because of this, Satan was driven from them and the sick Jews were not devil possessed in consequence. They may have been oppressed but not possessed, and there is a fine distinction between the two. The devil can still “bind” people but not enter them, *Luk 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a **daughter of Abraham**, whom Satan hath **bound**, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*

People get sick, believers and unbelievers get sick and it is wrong to attribute all sickness to the devil, and sin, *Joh 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. Joh 9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying,*

Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Joh 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Timothy has chronic illnesses which are not treated except by wine, *1Ti 5:23 Stop drinking only water. Take a little wine to help your stomach trouble and the other illnesses you always have.* CEV. Sickness is a fact of life and we live with it, and it is not always caused by satan or sin, sometimes it is caused directly by God for His purpose.

We must also acknowledge that Jesus does not heal every known disease, cancer, for example or amputated limbs. The diseases that Jesus heals are for a spiritual lesson to us, that say something about Him, and the disease is linked to a spiritual truth. He did not heal everyone, and if He had wanted to He could have just waved His Divine hand and disease would have been history. He did not. Enough said about healing for now as I do not want to deviate from what I am saying about devils.

The Jews for the most part were believing Jews and were not possessed, although some were and these cannot have been believers. Among their number were the Jewish religious leaders as well, *Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. Joh 8:45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Joh 8:46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? Joh 8:47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* These people were “fathered” by someone else other than God.

When we come to look at the Gentiles, in the period after the resurrection, we have a slightly different scenario. We have people who have not known the Lord God and Paul approaches them differently to the approach he uses towards the Jew.

Act 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. Act 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Act 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; Act 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; Act 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Act 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that

man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Act 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. Act 17:33 So Paul departed from among them.

Paul has to go right to the beginning, right to the foundation of the world and start building there. As well as this difference between the Jews and Gentiles, there is the basic state of the Gentiles. They are in service to the devil, *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

They show by their nature the effects of sin, *1Jn 3:8 **He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.** For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1Jn 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1Jn 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

Can it be clearer than this? He that commits sin is of the devil. It is saying that anyone and everyone that does sin is a servant of satan. Where has the church been for the past 2000 years? In spite of these verses, the church still thinks that it can play with the world's children, that an unequal yoke is not really important, mixing with unbelievers on equal terms is acceptable. I do not see Jesus doing this. He interacted with the devils children but He did not trust them, *Joh 2:24 But Jesus did not commit (πιστεύω = pisteuō , put in trust with) himself unto them, because he knew all men, Joh 2:25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*

The Christian, for whatever motive, goes out to the child of the devil with open arms, not seeing the danger, so well does satan disguise himself. The Christian trusts all his words and is immediately deceived into thinking, they are not such bad people, they only need a bit of persuasion and they will become like me. I am strong enough to overcome them.

And straightway, as soon as the Christian drops his guard, the devil is in. The devil does not relax with the Christian however, he is watching for a moment when you are not expecting him to pounce, *1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 1Pe 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* There is a great void between them and us.

But surely the Christian commits sin, did not the Scripture say, *Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; Aren't we in the same predicament as the unbeliever? No we are not, because we have an advocate, we have a protector, but only if we desire Him.

*1Jn 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 1Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 1Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1Jn 1:9 **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1Jn 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

When we go out to evangelise men we should not underestimate the scale of the task. We should also know our enemy, *Eph 6:11 Put on all the armor that God gives, so you can defend yourself against the devil's tricks. Eph 6:12 We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world. CEV.*

We should seek by prayer and the gift of God to shut down the operations of satan so that the word may have free run among its hearers, unhindered, *1Th 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.*

It is a truly evil world in which we live, and although we may see glimpses of God, the world is headed for destruction. If we take stock of the evil in the world we will see the truth of that saying. It is the barefaced, open flaunting of sin, and the justification of sin that makes this the most dangerous time in history. The devil and his followers are rising up for the final battle.

Wars and fighting start in us not outside of us, *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

As citizens of another kingdom we see the bankruptcy brought about by human desires. But it is not all about us, about redemption, there is an even greater purpose in which evil is overcome other than rescuing a few damaged humans. The Battle is being fought beyond our senses as Daniel was to find out, *Dan 10:12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words, Dan 10:13 But the prince of the*

kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

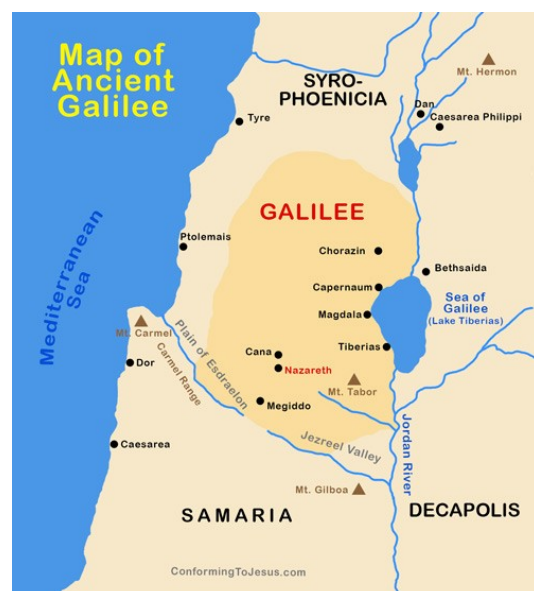
We are made to be witnesses of His Glory, Isa 43:7 *Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. Isa 43:11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.*

66. 12 disciples go out **Luke 9: 1 - 5**

*Luk 9:1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. Luk 9:2 And he sent them to preach **the Kingdom of God**, and to heal the sick. Luk 9:3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. Luk 9:4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. Luk 9:5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.*

There are other Gospel accounts of this short term mission which adds more details about the operation. It was to be limited to the Galilee region, and not to go into Samaria, to the south of Galilee *Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, **Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:** Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, **The kingdom of heaven is at hand.***

*Mar 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. Mar 6:12 And they went out, and **preached that men should repent.***



Are they preaching a consistent Gospel? Luke says the Kingdom of Heaven and Matthew says the Kingdom of God, why, because they are the same. It takes the mind of a dispensationalist to twist the scriptures to mean that they are

different. The two terms are interchangeable and Matthew uses the term that would point the Jew toward heaven (the Jew was already in the God's kingdom) and Luke the term more appropriate to his Gentile audience.

After sending out the 12 Jesus sends an additional group of 70 or 72. Why remains to be seen in another study? The seventy disciples or seventy-two disciples, known in the Eastern Christian traditions as the seventy apostles or seventy-two apostles, were early emissaries of Jesus mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. According to the Gospel of Luke, **the only gospel in which they appear**, Jesus appointed them and sent them out in pairs on a specific mission which is detailed in the text. The number of those disciples varies between either 70 or 72 depending on the version of scripture. In the Western Christian tradition they are usually referred to as disciples, whereas in the Eastern Christian tradition they are usually referred to as apostles. Using the original Greek words, both titles are descriptive, as an apostle is one sent on a mission, whereas a disciple is a student, but the two traditions differ on the scope of the words apostle and disciple.

Up to now, these 12 learners had not uttered a peep since Jesus stilled the waves, and had not spoken of the events that occurred in Gadara. Here they are being commissioned to go out and work the works of Jesus, and there is still so much to learn, but they have enough to go on. As someone has said, "Confidence in Christ is confidence in the Brethren".

The 12 disciples were equipped supernaturally for the Mission, but why did the disciples go in the same region as Jesus had already been, *Luk 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. Luk 4:15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.* If Jesus had taught in the synagogues of Galilee surely this Mission was redundant or at least repetitive?

Possibly the Mission had a number of objectives. It was apparently conducted outside of the synagogue worship, and so the Jews that did not attend would not miss out on the invitation to repent. This mass evangelism was getting to the disaffected Jews in the places where they lived, the people who had given up going to the synagogue. The disciples also came bearing the message of the Master. It was not just one man who carried the message but a group of disciples and they all had the signs following so that it reinforced the message of Jesus.

The message was simple, repent, change your mind, your mindset as we say today. Without a different attitude, they will not enter the Kingdom even though they think they will. It was not something to be argued over, disputed, it was to be dogmatically asserted and where the people did not receive it they did not stay long, but shook the dust off of their feet as they went their way. They would not take the tiniest dust particle of that place with them.

One wonders what attitude the disciples had at this time to evangelism. Did they actually care for the individuals that they were sent to or did they do it out of duty to Christ? There is a big difference in the two attitudes. Duty to Christ does not necessary think about the people they speak to, only that they are faithful in transmitting the message. They could be speaking to a wall for all the difference it makes. Speaking to the eternal souls of people means that you should have a deeper concern for their lives, and I do not think the disciples did, or not very much concern. In their defence, they were very young, and it is true of young people that they are very selfish, but that goes away with responsibility and age.

They were certainly partisan in their preaching, more tolerant of their Jewish brethren than of the others, like the Samaritans. The disciples still had a lot to learn and for some of them it was learning about themselves, *Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? Luk 9:55 **But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.** Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.* Indeed, of what spirit were they?

They did not know about themselves yet but here they were preaching the Gospel. What a sad commentary on the disciples and on the state of man. But the Gospel must go forth and as Paul says later on, *Php 1:14 Now most of the Lord's followers have become brave and are fearlessly telling the message. Php 1:15 Some are preaching about Christ because they are jealous and envious of us. Others are preaching because they want to help. Php 1:16 They love Christ and know that I am here to defend the good news about him. Php 1:17 But the ones who are jealous of us are not sincere. They just want to cause trouble for me while I am in jail. CEV.* But at least Christ is preached, *Php 1:18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

It is only by preaching that the disciples will find out about themselves. God could save men by Himself alone, but He has decreed otherwise, *1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by **the foolishness of preaching** to save them that believe.* It is not just the preached to but the preacher who should get the message. They do change with time and the characters, as they age, are far more in line with the Kingdom, but not yet.

You say, "it is wrong of you to hold these men up as an example of the failings inherent in man, they are only doing their best with the knowledge they have". That is true, but they are the very examples given to us, and if they are not capable of saying, *1Co 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,*

what example are we set, and is it wrong that we are failing by the example we are set? They may be venerated saints in hindsight, with the experience of the rear view mirror, but they are certainly not at the time that we are looking at.

It is not a perfect start to their ministry, and they are plagued by human weakness but none the less, Jesus chose them and let them go, with their “warts and all”, to point men to Himself. It is this which adds a reality to the times in which they were living and to the characters of the disciples. They were just like us, full of contradictions, full of sins, full of self, all trying to make progress in a world that did not want them. They were vying with each other to be somebody, to be the greatest, to be the chief, but they still had not learned the lesson of service.

They wanted something for themselves, *Mar 10:35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, **Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.*** *Mar 10:36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?* *Mar 10:37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.....Luk 22:24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them **should be accounted the greatest.*** *Luk 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. Luk 22:26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

Their perspective on the ministry was all wrong, *Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, **Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*** *Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Luk 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Luk 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; **but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*** They were too short sighted and looked for earthly advantages instead of heavenly ones.

One thing that they lack is compassion. The Latin root for the word compassion is *pati*, which means to suffer, and the prefix *com-* means with. Compassion, originating from *compati*, literally means to suffer with. The definition of compassion, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." And the New Oxford American Dictionary defines compassion as "a sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others." Different aspects of compassion's meaning are emphasized by each dictionary. Merriam-Webster mentions a "desire to alleviate" the distress of others, whereas the New Oxford American dictionary simply refers to the broad sympathetic feelings associated with compassion. Empathy is an ability to relate to another person's pain as if its

your own. Empathy, like sympathy, is grounded in emotion and feeling, but empathy doesn't have an active component to it. Whatever definition you choose, the disciples were lacking in it.

Jesus shows us ourselves through the eyes of the disciples. The selfish, unsympathetic, compassionless people they were, we are too, *Mar 6:34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. Mar 6:35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: Mar 6:36 **Send them away, that they may go into the country round about**, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. Mar 6:37 He answered and said unto them, **Give ye them to eat**. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?*

The easiest way to get rid of a problem is to dismiss it from the mind, “**Send them away, that they may go into the country round about**”. Its not my problem that they are hungry, I will just take care of myself, because I refuse to even think what the other person is going through. I will just concentrate on the bigger picture and leave the details to someone else. We too are like that, we are so locked in to our view of the Kingdom of God that we fail to observe the needs of those around us. They could look upon this scene impartially, just as they viewed the blind man. He was a theological question to them and not a person, *Joh 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. Joh 9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* They look at him with the eyes that he has not got and do not think what he is going through.

The man with the demon possessed son could get little help from the disciples, *Luk 9:40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. Luk 9:41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. Luk 9:42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father..... Mar 9:28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? Mar 9:29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.*

Was the failure in the disciples a failure of compassion? Casting out demons is not just a matter of mechanics, saying the words without concern for the individual. It was prayerful consideration, fasting for the relief of the problem, having real and genuine concern to do something. It was not just turning on the “miracle tap” and turning it off again, it was entering in to the sufferer’s life.

Perhaps this is not possible with young people and it comes with the experiences of suffering?

I am reminded also that the 12 disciples bear an uncanny resemblance to the 12 sons of Jacob, and I suppose that like father like son, they followed Jacob, the twister, the heel catcher, the deceiver, *Gen 27:11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: Gen 27:12 My father peradventure will feel me, **and I shall seem to him as a deceiver**; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.*

They behaved in a criminal fashion to get rid of Joseph, although Joseph lacked modesty in his boasting, and as a result the brothers were jealous of him. They also behaved in a deceitful manner to get vengeance upon Hamor the son of Shechem, *Gen 34:25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. Gen 34:26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. Gen 34:27 **The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city**, because they had defiled their sister. Gen 34:28 They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field.*

The hard heart of the sons of Jacob is mirrored in the hard heart of the 12 disciples. If these disciples had not been moved upon by the Spirit of God, they would have remained hard hearted, unseeing individuals, not worthy of the name of Christ. They are certainly not examples to the world at this stage but change does come. It seems as if Christ took these hard hearted disciples deliberately, to take us back in time and to see that nothing had changed in Israel, even though Moses had given them the Law.

They went out as disciples and they came back as apostles, *Luk 9:1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.....Luk 9:10 And the **apostles**, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.* Heaven help us if that is all the example that we have.

You can see in all of this, how the heart of a man has a bearing upon the Gospel that he will preach and the example that he will show because of it. Where though is Jesus Christ in any of it? Where does the light of Christ break upon man instead of the dark shadows of the natural man?

67. John the Baptist returns *Luke 9: 7 - 9*

Luk 9:7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; Luk 9:8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. Luk 9:9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

One of the first questions that I asked was, “where is Herod speaking from at this time?” This verse is sandwiched between two events which took place in the Galilee region, so is this also taking place in Galilee? It may seem irrelevant to you but it reveals so much about the narrative and the mission of Jesus.

Herod the Tetrarch or Herod Antipas as he was known had a fourth part of the kingdom of Israel, and his territory comprised a part in Galilee on the west bank of Jordan and a part on the east bank to the south of this. The Tetrarchy of Judea was formed following the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, when his kingdom was divided between his sons as an inheritance. It persisted into the first century, until the kingdom was reunited under Herod Agrippa I in AD 41.

He was responsible for building projects at Sepphoris and Betharamphtha, and for the construction of his capital Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Named in honour of his patron, the emperor Tiberius, the city later became a centre of rabbinic learning after the Jewish-Roman wars (66-135 AD). Sepphoris, south of the Nazareth ridge was a city that existed already in Hellenistic times, first, second century BC, but it was really developed by Herod Antipas, when he went there in 4 AD, after his father's death.

He divorced his Nabataean wife, the daughter of Aretas IV, king of the desert kingdom adjoining his own, to marry Herodias, formerly the wife of his half brother. The marriage offended his former father-in-law and alienated his Jewish subjects. According to Mark 6 and the parallel accounts in Matthew 14 and Luke 3, when John the Baptist, one of his subjects, reproached Herod for this marriage, Herodias goaded her husband into imprisoning him. Still unmollified, she inveigled her daughter, Salome, to ask for the Baptist's head in return for dancing at her stepfather's birthday feast.

Antipas reluctantly beheaded John, and later, when Jesus' miracles were reported to him, he believed that John the Baptist had been resurrected. When Jesus was



arrested in Jerusalem, according to Luke 23, Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judaea, first sent him to Antipas, who was spending Passover in the capital, because Jesus came from Antipas' realm. The tetrarch was eager to see Jesus, expecting more miracles, but soon returned him to Pilate, unwilling to pass judgment.

How did John the Baptist die? According to Josephus, sometime after baptizing Jesus, John the Baptist was killed at the palace-fortress of Machaerus, located near the Dead Sea in modern Jordan. Built by King Herod the Great, the palace was occupied at the time by his son and successor, known as Herod Antipas. But is Josephus correct and do we follow his take on history or do we follow the Bible?

*Mar 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. Mar 6:18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Mar 6:19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: Mar 6:20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Mar 6:21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper **to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;** Mar 6:22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.*

There is no mention of Herod being in the region of his southern kingdom of Perea but of his being with Galilean rulers. I let F F Bruce explain,

But a further impression received from Mark's account is that the party was held in Galilee: it was attended by Antipas's chief officials and commanders—his magnates and chiliarchs—and the leading men of Galilee. No mention is made of the leading men of Peraea, whose presence might have been expected at a birthday party in Machaerus. On the whole it seems most likely that the party was held at Tiberias, and that the impression we get that John's head was delivered to the girl on a plate while the guests were still present is due to the vividness with which Mark's tale is told.

Luke's accurate and relatively abundant knowledge about the Herod family may be due to his acquaintance with certain people who had fairly close contact with the family. He mentions Joanna, the wife



of one of Antipas' stewards, among the well-to-do women who supported Jesus and his disciples during their itinerant ministry, *Luk 8:3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.*

So it is more than likely the John was beheaded in Tiberius, on the lakeside of Galilee.

From Tiberius you can look out over Magdala, Gennesaret, Capernaum and Bethsaida, upon all the places that Jesus was ministering in but He is never recorded as visiting Tiberius although He could have if He wanted. And all the time Herod the tetrarch is looking out over the land where Jesus is ministering the Gospel but he never meets Him until the Crucifixion.

The problem with Tiberias is that it was considered polluted. Not air pollution, or water pollution. But "corpse" pollution. Tiberias had been built on the shores of the Sea of Galilee over an older town called Hamat. In fact, right over Hamat's cemetery. Because Tiberias had no arable land, Jews from other cities continued to bring their dead to be buried there. So then, Tiberias was a cemetery, a necropolis, even before it was a city! Not that it would have stopped Jesus from going there, after all, He was walking among the living dead anyway.

Jesus never went to Tiberius and we do not know why. Perhaps it was because these towns of Herod were heavily influenced by Rome and Jesus did not want to get involved in the petty politics of empire. As He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world". He was building for Heaven.

With the growing Jesus movement, Herod's interest had been rekindled. This Jesus, was He John the Baptist raised from the grave? Herod must have felt that there was a similarity between their ministries. The gossip from the people caused a lot of speculation, a bit like the fake news we have to contend with daily, the half truths and the lies.

But Herod was as cunning as a fox and wanted Jesus to see him, *Luk 9:9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.* I suspect that he engineered a plan to get Jesus out of the way when he couldn't see Him, and he gets the Pharisees to do his dirty work, *Luk 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. Luk 13:32 And he said unto them, **Go ye, and tell that fox,** Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Luk 13:33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*

Jesus does not for a moment think that the Pharisees were acting out of kindness with their warning or that it even originated with them. The cunning fox had sent the with a message to get Jesus out of Galilee, so Jesus sends a message back to

Herod, *Luk 13:32 And He said to them, Going, say to that fox, Behold, today and tomorrow I cast out demons and I complete cures, and the third day I am **being perfected**.* *Luk 13:33 But today and tomorrow and on the following day I must travel on. For it is not possible for a prophet to perish outside Jerusalem.* LITV.

He is telling us Herod that he cannot kill Him, for He must progress His way to Jerusalem. But more than that He said, “*on the third day I finish my course.*” Weymouth translation. He is telling Herod and us, that he will fulfil His Mission on the third day, a reference to the Crucifixion.

But is there more to this story? Herod feared John, he was as we say today, “in awe of him”, and he kept Herodius from touching him, even though John had spoken out against her, *Mar 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.* *Mar 6:18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.* *Mar 6:19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:* He kept John in protective custody from his wife, and this shows he feared John more than he feared her.

Mar 6:20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Dr Gill notes that the Coptic version, instead saying “he did many things”, reads, “he hesitated much”: he was perplexed and distressed, he did not know what to do with himself; his conscience was uneasy, some things were pleasing to him, and others greatly afflicted him; his mind was distracted, he could not tell what to think, say, or do: however, it had such an effect upon him, that he had some respect for John; a veneration of him; at least, some fear and dread of him, which kept him from taking away his life, or suffering any others to do it.

But at his party and probably due to the wine, he lost control of the situation, and John was doomed, and full of regret he none the less killed him, *Mar 6:26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.* *Mar 6:27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison.*

Herod was like the man who received the word on stony ground, who received it with joy, but it withered in the heat of life. He was talkative in Pilgrim’s Progress. Talkative is a man whom Christian and Faithful meet on their journey between the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair. He is from the City of Destruction, and Christian is familiar with Talkative’s bad reputation. Though Talkative loves talking about spirituality, religion hasn’t affected his heart or lifestyle. He is notorious for drinking too much and mistreating his family and servants. Sure enough, when Faithful tries to engage Talkative in a conversation about the gospel’s transformative power in a human heart, Talkative avoids the subject and after this, the other pilgrims part company with Talkative.

I think this is Herod exactly and Jesus knows it well. He is not going to give the man the time of day. Herod wants to talk but not to do, he talks the talk but does not walk the walk and as far as Jesus is concerned he is a waste of space.

Another opportunity presents itself when Jesus is finally brought before the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, *Luk 23:6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. Luk 23:7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. Luk 23:8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Luk 23:9 **Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.** Luk 23:10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. Luk 23:11 **And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.** Luk 23:12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves..... Luk 23:15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.*

Jesus says nothing to Herod, nothing about repentance, nothing about salvation, nothing about following Him. Is it a lost opportunity or the opportunity of the lost? Either way Herod is lost. He is a murderer of the greatest prophet of the OT, and it is the mark of his evil soul. It is not worth Jesus' breath to give this idler time. His true heart is seen in the mockery of Jesus and that is the last he sees of Christ until judgement day.

How different is modern evangelism to that time long ago. We keep knocking on the same door, we plead with people, and we even compromise with them, in the hope that they will give their lives to Jesus. Never once do we look at the Saviour's method, never once do we ask God what we should do in respect of the person before us, we just press on in our own stupid way.

Jesus did not waste His time, and once having heard the Gospel, it is either rejection or acceptance. The people invited to the Feast rejected the invitation because they were too busy, *Luk 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.* He did not plead with them to come, he called others to come.

If you have got more important things to do than come to Christ, then farewell to you. If this life is more important to you, then goodbye. And if you just want to talk about religion, but have no intention of making a commitment, we like Jesus, have nothing to say to you.

68. The five thousand *Luke 9: 10 - 17*

Luk 9:10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. Luk 9:11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. Luk 9:12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. Luk 9:13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. Luk 9:14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. Luk 9:15 And they did so, and made them all sit down. Luk 9:16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. Luk 9:17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Luke does not take the conclusion of this miracle as far as Matthew or Mark, but we shall come to that after we have looked at Luke's account. I am tempted to say that it is as if the writers got together and agreed to leave bits of the account out and that they each agreed what they would selectively include. By this I mean, that you have to look at all of the accounts to get a full picture and that they appear to do this in order to make you study the scripture. There is need for only one account of the Gospel if it includes everything but the writers seem to have divided it up between themselves and the reader must put it back together again.

The story takes place in the afternoon, possibly the early evening, *9:12 And when the day began to wear away*, so there was a need to send the people away. At Bethsaida, close to Capernaum, Jesus had been ministering to the people who followed him "*and healed them that had need of healing*". We are told that 5000 men made up the crowd, and Matthew says, *Mat 14:21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children*. That means that there were probably in excess of 12000 people if you included everyone. That is the entire population of Great Hollands, an estate where I live, men, women, children, all having a need to disperse for the night and all having not eaten.

Jesus presents His twelve disciples with a logistical nightmare. Where does the food come from to feed such a crowd and how do you distribute it to them? That frightening prospect of such an enormous proportions must have led the disciples to think that the best solution was to send the people away, in other

words, bury your head in the sand and you will not see the problem. Jesus throws the problem straight back at them, *"But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat"*. What, they say, *"We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people."* They still had no idea of Jesus power.

You would think that by now the disciples had a good idea who Jesus the Messiah was. They had seen healings, blind people getting their sight, the dead having been raised, cripples walking, the power of Christ over the elements, stilling the tempest, the power over devils and yet they still had not appreciated that He was Lord of all. They are just like us. Suddenly, when there is a crisis, God gets smaller, and sometimes He shrinks to nothing. We are down to our own resources and we do not even look in His direction.

How big is your God compared with your problem? I see some Christians that have a "Jesus just in Case". They like the idea of worship, and praying and singing hymns but when you put that to the test in the Universal theatre, they have no faith. They like "Jesus just in Case", as the figure to look to, just in case it is all true. When however, the test comes, do we trust in Jesus? They don't trust in Him.

I illustrate this by the attitude of some Christians to science. When it comes to His birth and death they don't seem to have a problem. When it comes to creation they do not accept Him as the Creator and substitute evolution and gradualism for direct creation, thinking that this is more scientific. It is not. Any person who says that they know how life started from non-life is a "guesser". They do not know how it started because they were not there, and they will never know for certain because of this, yet people still believe their pronouncements as facts. The reason that they do not believe that Christ is the Creator is that they do not want Him as Lord.

We are tested in life by Christ words, *Joh 6:28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Joh 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, **that ye believe on him whom he hath sent***. Do you want to do great things for God, then this is what you do. You ***"believe on him whom he hath sent"***. If the Bible says He created all things what will you do? Will you believe on Him or not?

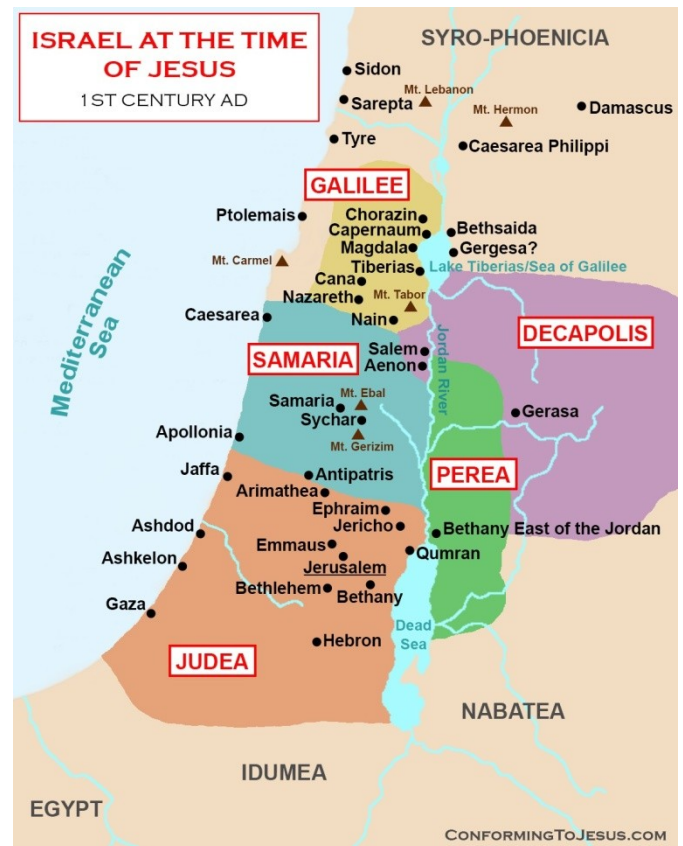
Now you can see why people think that they are doing wonderful works, which they are but it does them no eternal good because they do not “**believe on him whom he hath sent**”, *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

The disciples are in a better place as they have Jesus with them, but they still lack complete faith in Jesus. They are just like us, struggling onto make sense of the world, everything fighting the unfamiliar, having their world overturned by this Miracle worker.

He could feed the world, but He doesn't. He could feed the world with next to nothing and save mankind from hunger and poverty, but He doesn't. This is a local miracle and I think it teaches a lesson to the disciples, then and now. It is an act of creation and they must see that He just does not only control nature but He creates the nature He controls. This is the first lesson that comes out of the miraculous feeding, *Joh 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

Having sat the down on “green grass”, like the good shepherd, the Lord of Psalm 23, He feeds them, *Mar 6:39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. Mar 6:40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. Mar 6:41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.*

Can you imagine the amount of fish and bread to feed 12,000 people? One fish and one loaf per person, about 6 tonnes of food for all of the people. It was a huge amount of food. By setting them in groups it made the distribution easier, firstly Jesus blesses the food and passes it to the disciples to set before them, and then to the groups of 50's and 100's. The disciples must have seen it



multiply before their eyes and it is possible that they were agents in the multiplication. It is possible that the food kept on multiplying after they gave it to the clusters of people. This was like the manna from heaven, and they had a surplus. We can only guess at how the people felt about this strange occurrence.

It was not a unique occurrence because Jesus feed another group of 4,000 (plus women and children?), *Mar 8:9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.* They were a Gentile multitude and they came from the region of Decapolis, *Mar 7:31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.* There were 5,000 Jewish followers and 4,000 Gentile followers in two different miracles of feeding.

The feeding of the 5,000 took place near Bethsaida, close to the Sea of Galilee. In contrast, the feeding of the 4,000 took place in the region of the Gerasenes, in the region around the Decapolis. One commentator says,

“In this miracle, Jesus takes **five** loaves and feeds **five** thousand, which is reminiscent of the **five** books of the Jewish Law (Genesis, Exodus, ...). Not only that, but when everyone had finished eating, **twelve** baskets of left-overs were collected, which was probably alluding to the **twelve** tribes of Israel. In this second miracle, **seven** loaves are used and **seven** baskets are collected. The number **seven** is symbolic of completeness (i.e. not just Jews but Gentiles too) and the number **seven** is evocative of the **seven** days of creation when God created **all** humanity.”

It is possible. There are lots of numbers to play with and it will no doubt add more to your learning, but I am not going to do it for you. The major point is that there were two separate feedings, and one was to the Jews and one to the Gentiles. How did the Gentiles hear about Jesus? I suppose that we have the man who told his neighbours to thank for that, *Luk 8:38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Luk 8:39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.*

The second great lesson from this miracle is “**watch what you feed upon**”, *Mat 16:5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, **they had forgotten to take bread.** Mat 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, **Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees** have taken no bread. Mat 16:8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Mat 16:9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Mat 16:10 Neither the seven loaves of the four*

*thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Mat 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that **I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?** Mat 16:12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*

What is the leaven of the Pharisees? *Luk 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, **which is hypocrisy.*** It is the practice of claiming to have higher standards or more noble beliefs than is the case and the word in the Greek means actor.

By warning the disciples against the hypocrisy, or “leaven,” of the Pharisees, Jesus sought to keep His followers from an insidious influence that would undermine faith and corrupt their walk with God. Believers today should heed the same warning from the Lord and guard against pharisaic attitudes and the temptation to take pride in man-made teachings and traditions. Once a bit of Pharisaism is introduced into the church, it can quickly spread.

Leaven or yeast is used in baking and a very little goes a long way, it is so powerful. But was forbidden to the Israelites during the Passover, *Exo 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. Exo 12:13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. Exo 12:14 And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Exo 12:15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.....Exo 12:39 And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.*

As Christ our Passover is slain for us, just as the lamb was slain for the Israelites, we keep the same feast without leaven, *1Co 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 1Co 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

There it is, the leaven of the Pharisees, hypocrisy, the leaven of malice and wickedness which does not become us. If we have eaten of Christ we have eaten of sincerity and truth. This is what Jesus directs His disciples, you and I towards. It is not the ordinary bread that should preoccupy us as it did them, it is the inner unseen bread which we nibble at. What we feed our souls upon.

But still we snack on

69. Who do you say that I am *Luke 9: 18 - 22*

Luk 9:18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? Luk 9:19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. Luk 9:20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. Luk 9:21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; Luk 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

Who do people say that Jesus is? There is a lot of opinion as to who He was, a good man but not a god, a wise man but not different from the sages of the ages, a prophet like those in the OT, a spirit being, some said John the Baptist reborn. There are lots of different opinions about Him, all coming from human reason. And it is just that, human reason that cannot fathom who this Jesus of Nazareth is. Who do you say that He is?

He came to this world to save the lost and the world just did not know Him, *Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.* It was if He was invisible or in disguise as far as the majority of mankind was concerned. Why did He have to make it so difficult for men to believe in Him? It is almost as if He did it in secret, in fact His brethren accused Him of this, *Joh 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. Joh 7:4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, **shew thyself to the world.** Joh 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him. Joh 7:6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. Joh 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.* But His brethren had got it wrong also and it was because of their unbelief.

We have evangelist's today who say that all you have to do is "give yourself to Jesus" and all your problems will be over, life will become a breeze. Will it really? Which Jesus will you give yourself to? You hardly know anything about Him and

yet you think that you can make such a certain sure commitment to Him. Do you even know that following Christ comes with a downside? Jesus said, *Mat 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Mat 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.* That is not a breeze. Christianity is no picnic, and the people are liars who say that it is as simple as “giving yourself to Him” and that is all.

The declaration of Jesus to the human soul, is not a work of man but it is a work of God. It cannot be understood by natural man, *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Try as he may, he will not see God. If God will not work in the natural man, then no amount of ranting and raving on behalf of the preacher will persuade the lost soul. Paul says, *1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase.*** Jesus says something similar, *Luk 8:5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. Luk 8:6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. Luk 8:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. Luk 8:8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* The seed, the word of God goes where God wills it.

Only “ears to hear” can even surmount the first step to life. *Joh 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life!" Jesus answered. "Without me, no one can go to the Father".* CEV. That is no one, no person, can get to God by any other means, by any other religion, by any other philosophy, by anything. Of course you may think you can, you may think by mans reason, you can get there but it is not by Christ unless you go on his terms, unless you believe in Him. . *"Without me, no one can go to the Father"* . That is why it is an important question to answer, *"Whom say the people that I am?"*

Just as there is a variety of opinion about Jesus, to match these, there are a variety of “Jesus” to correspond to them, but only one is valid. Which one? Which is the real Jesus? At this distance in time from the events of His life, surely its not possible know, its all lost in that blurry past. But is it? Jesus said, *Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and **they are they which testify of me.** Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

Jesus says, that the Scriptures testify, witness, bear testimony of Him. John did the same, *Joh 1:15 **John bare witness of him,** and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.* John directs us to Jesus. The real Jesus is He whom the scriptures direct us to and declare Him to be, without the interpretation of men thrown in the mix.

Ancient Scripture will tell you what Jesus is like and nothing else. Not the Baptists, the Anglicans, the catholics, not the JW's, not any denominational article of faith. I do not attempt to join that number, and as far as I go, I point out the scriptures to you, but you must make your own mind up. It is your personal decision to follow Jesus and you must be assured in yourself that you are following Him.

The intellectual Christ, the Christ of the Bible, is however not enough to save you. You can have a theologically correct view of Christ, a perfect understanding of His person, yet you are not saved, *Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* It takes more than knowledge, it takes that spark of life from the Father to kick start life in the soul.

Jesus said, *Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. Joh 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and **thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh**, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Its a profound saying that we must take to heart. Another translation puts it like this, *Joh 3:6 A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit. Joh 3:7 Do not be surprised because I tell you that you must all be born again. Joh 3:8 The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit."* GNB.

You cannot make yourself "born again", a child of the Kingdom, its not possible because you have no control over the Spirit of God, any more than you can control the wind or see the wind. The Spirit is like the wind, "*The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*"

Being born again is a Sovereign work of God, and that in turn will lead to a revealing of Christ in a person, and that will lead to a true knowledge of who He is. Matthew adds a little more information to the story, *Mat 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Mat 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, **but my Father which is in heaven.***

Now you can see the complete picture to the question, "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*" There are the opinions of men and there is God's word, and God's word trumps all. And that is why I cannot give you a formula that will make you a Christian. There is no recipe, "How to become a Christian", Christianity for dummies. A man who tells you that you have to jump through so many hoops to become a Christian, to do certain things, is a liar. You cannot tell a man what to

do to become saved because of the very fact that the Spirit goes where He will, not where you will and that is that.

You can give a lot of good advice along the way, but it is in the direction of Christ, as John Bunyan showed,

Now I saw in my dream, while he was walking in the fields, that he was reading in his Book—as was his habit. Being greatly distressed in his mind as he read—he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" I saw also, that he looked this way and that way—as if he wanted to run. Yet he stood still, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go.

I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming towards him, who asked, "Why are you crying out?" He answered, "Sir, I realize, by the Book in my hand—that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment. And I find that I am not willing to do the first—nor able to do the second."

Then Evangelist said, "Why are you not willing to die—since this life is attended with so many troubles?" The man answered, "Because I fear that this burden upon my back will sink me lower than the grave—and I shall fall into Hell! And, Sir, if I am not fit to die—then I am sure that I am not fit to go to judgment, and from thence to execution! My thoughts about these things make me cry out!"

Then Evangelist said, "If this is your condition, why do you stand still?" He answered, "Because I do not know where to go!" Then Evangelist gave him a parchment scroll—on which was written, "Flee from the wrath to come!". The man therefore, reading it, looked very sincerely upon Evangelist, and asked, "Where must I flee?" Then Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, said, "Do you see yonder narrow-gate?" The man answered, "No." Evangelist replied, "Do you see yonder shining light?" He said, "I think I do." Then Evangelist said, "Keep that light in your eye, and go directly to it—and then you shall see the gate; at which—when you knock—you shall be told what you must do.

"So I saw in my dream, that the man began to run. Now, he had not run far from his own door—before his wife and children, seeing him depart, began to shout after him to return. But the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, "Life! life! Eternal life!" So he did not look behind him—but fled towards the middle of the plain.

That is the start of the Christian adventure, and it is one of the many steps that Christian takes. It is not over in a flash, and then you can get back to your old life. It is the start of a journey leading to the Cross and the burden of sin falling

off, onward through all manner of trials of life, until the pilgrim gets to the heavenly city and crosses the river of death. But that advice to go in at the narrow gate is the start, for broad is the way leading to destruction. I shall discuss this further but not now.

Jesus goes on to say, *Luk 9:21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; Luk 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.*

The mystery of His death and resurrection is brought to the fore in this revelation to Peter and the disciples. This is the first time Jesus broached this subject and the disciples were to keep their mouths shut on what they heard for now. This revelation about the Master must have provoked much questioning among them. Up to now, they had gotten an incomplete picture of Jesus and how this ministry of preaching and healing would play out, is anyone's guess.

To this point in time, Jesus had been like the men of old, like Elijah, or John the Baptist, and the disciples when asked who men thought He was, said what the general opinion about Him was. But Peter in one of those inspired moments which he had, said that Jesus was the anointed one of God, the Christ, the Messiah, but that needed clarification. The disciples had been with Jesus long enough to have seen that this person was no ordinary prophet. They had seen Him do things which had never been done by anyone, healing the blind, and the miracles He did in abundance, no one had ever seen in the history of the Earth. This man Jesus was truly special and it would lead to the conclusion that He was the Messiah spoken of in Scripture.

Messiah means anointed one, a Christ, just like David, *1Sa 16:12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. 1Sa 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.* Lots of people were anointed, smeared with oil poured on their heads. It was a mark of the commissioning by God. David was a messiah, a Christ. The chief priests were all in their turn messiahs, *Lev 8:12 And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.*

What is different about this one? The Samaritan woman knew He would come, *Joh 4:25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Joh 4:26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.* Peter already had an inkling that Jesus was the Messiah, *Joh 1:40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Joh 1:41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

Peter already had inkling that Jesus was the Messiah because of what Andrew had said. It was not a new thought but it was now a sanctified thought. God had revealed it to him.

This revelation to them was astounding. Unique in its scope, for the Messiah predicted His own death, and not only that, but His resurrection also, *Luk 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.*

What did it mean to them, since they had no idea how these events were to come about. They were not only going to find out, they were going to live through these strange days, days that the world had not seen.

70. Take up your cross and follow Me *Luke 9: 23 - 27*

Luk 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luk 9:24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luk 9:25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? Luk 9:26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. Luk 9:27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God.

The hint at His death was given in the previous verse, *Luk 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.* How is now hinted at, and that is crucifixion. Wiki gives a graphic account of the method.

Crucifixion was typically carried out by specialized teams, consisting of a commanding Centurion and his soldiers. First, the condemned would be stripped naked and scourged. This would cause the person to lose a large amount of blood, and approach a state of shock. The convict then usually had to carry the horizontal beam (patibulum in Latin) to the place of execution, but not necessarily the whole cross.

During the death march, the prisoner, probably still nude after the scourging, would be led through the most crowded streets bearing a titulus – a sign board proclaiming the prisoner's name and crime. Upon arrival at the place of execution, selected to be especially public, the convict would be stripped of any remaining clothing, then nailed to the cross naked. If the crucifixion took place in an established place of

execution, the vertical beam (stipes) might be permanently embedded in the ground. In this case, the condemned person's wrists would first be nailed to the patibulum, and then he or she would be hoisted off the ground with ropes to hang from the elevated patibulum while it was fastened to the stipes. Next the feet or ankles would be nailed to the upright stake. The 'nails' were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 inches (13 to 18 cm) long, with a square shaft 3/8 inch (10 mm) across. The titulus would also be fastened to the cross to notify onlookers of the person's name and crime as they hung on the cross, further maximizing the public impact.

There may have been considerable variation in the position in which prisoners were nailed to their crosses and how their bodies were supported while they died. Seneca the Younger recounts: "I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet." One source claims that for Jews (apparently not for others), a man would be crucified with his back to the cross as is traditionally depicted, while a woman would be nailed facing her cross, probably with her back to onlookers, or at least with the stipes providing some semblance of modesty if viewed from the front. Such concessions were "unique" and not made outside a Jewish context. Several sources mention some sort of seat fastened to the stipes to help support the person's body, thereby prolonging the person's suffering and humiliation by preventing the asphyxiation caused by hanging without support. Justin Martyr calls the seat a cornu, or "horn," leading some scholars to believe it may have had a pointed shape designed to torment the crucified person. This would be consistent with Seneca's observation of victims with their private parts impaled.

Crucifixion was intended to be a gruesome spectacle: the most painful and humiliating death imaginable. It was used to punish slaves, pirates, and enemies of the state. It was originally reserved for slaves (hence still called "supplicium servile" by Seneca), and later extended to citizens of the lower classes (humiliores, the humble people).

The disciples would know about crucifixion as they had plenty of experience of it in Galilee as the article shows,

The burning of the city of Sepphoris by the Romans in 4 BC, occurred right about the time Jesus was born. Sepphoris, a haven for political activism against Roman rule, was located only 3½ miles (an easy walking distance) of the Nazareth ridge, and 20 miles from Capernaum in the Judean province of Galilee. Nazareth was almost like a suburb of Sepphoris, and so it is reasonable to assume that destruction had a powerful financial, social, and psychological impact on the people of

Nazareth, including Jesus' family and Jesus himself as he was growing up. Smoke from the burning metropolis could easily have been seen from Nazareth.

The Romans either killed or sold into slavery an estimated 30,000 inhabitants of Sepphoris. Some 2,000 of Jesus' fellow Galileans were taken to Jerusalem (about 100 miles to the south) and crucified in a single day by order of the Roman military commander, Quintilus Varus.

The destruction of Sepphoris followed a rebellion led by Judath the Galilean in response to the death of Herod the Great, who was Rome's client king in Judea. Judath and his followers had seized control of Herod's armoury in Sepphoris, provoking the expected response from Rome.

The rebellion in Sepphoris no doubt fanned an already existing mistrust of Galileans by the Romans, who viewed them as them as troublemakers, revolutionaries, and probably terrorists. The mass slaughter and enslavement of the Sepphorans no doubt fueled an already existing hatred of the Romans by the Galileans. The setting was being prepared in advance for the crucifixion of Jesus.

The disciples knew about crucifixion as it happened right on their doorstep and here they were being told to prepare for death. Its like a death cult or suicide cult, people who join are marked for destruction, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ."* We cannot deny it, it is calling for death, it is crying for the followers of Jesus to give their lives up, and to lose their lives for His sake, it is suicide.

What death is He talking about, and what does taking up your cross and denying self mean? This and many other questions raise their head when we confront this verse. It was a cruel and vicious death and Jesus is telling His disciples that if they are sincere and want to follow Him, they have got to be prepared for this. As Christ does, so do they, but does every Christian get "crucified"? The short answer is "yes" but we shall see how.

"If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." He does not say take up MY cross, Jesus' cross, but take up his **own** cross. It is about "denial of self", no, not being in a "state of denial", but **denial of self**. Bonhoeffer's definition is excellent,

Self-denial means knowing only Christ, and no longer oneself. It means seeing only Christ, who goes ahead of us, and no longer the path that is too difficult for us. Again, self-denial is saying only: He goes ahead of us; hold fast to him... The first suffering we must experience

is the call sundering our ties to this world. This is the death of the old human being in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Whoever enters discipleship enters Jesus' death, and puts his or her own life into death; this has been so from the beginning.

If knowing Christ is overambitious, then following Christ is certainly not. In fact that is what we are told to do and in doing so we will deny self. We like to put self denial down to lists of things we should not do, or things to do, and that is quite right, but in having a list we neglect the principle. We are off doing things rather than embracing the first principle. We concentrate on some things and possibly forget other things. We are subject to guilt, which we assuage with occasional good works, giving is an example for instance, of denying self, so that we can go out and spend money on ourselves with a quieter conscience. We are fat, so we fast, in the hope that fasting will be seen by God as a denial of self, then we are back indulging our appetites, so no change there. We use less cosmetics than some people, or we drink less, and we think that is self denial, but it is only a relative denial, vector morality, denial in degrees. We think we are being godly when we go to church and we behave differently for an hour or two, and we call that self denial, and then we are back with whatever we were doing before. We like being religious, talking about the Bible but only for a time, and we call this self denial, then we are back in the world.

But if you take this principle, "**follow Christ**" then you will be constantly reminded of self denial. It is a summary of what we must be like and what we must do. Just as the 10 commandments are a summary of the 613 plus case laws arising from the 10 laws. Yet even these 10 laws are summed up in two, *Luk 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readeest thou? Luk 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Luk 10:28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.* Now we can sum up the whole law, the 10 Commandments, love God, love neighbour, **in one overriding rule of life.....follow Me.**

It is a neat summary of duty. It is a question of what we value most, Christ or the World. It is the temptation that He went through to determine where his heart lay, whether He would use life to gain bread or anything else, and in doing so neglect what God would say. Whether we would do whatever the devil said to gain power and influence or whether we would serve God in simplicity, whether we would take unnecessary risks in this life to test God, walking outside of the boundaries He has set or not, whether we would be led in to temptation or not or whether we would be led by Him.

Well you say, I did not think salvation in Christ was so complicated, that it involved so much soul searching, I thought it was just about forgiveness, getting rid of past sin, not about **a future walk, Follow Me.** I thought I was just going to be freed from the shackles of sin, I did not realise that this freedom was to set

me upon another path, and that there was so much more to come. In fact it seems to get more difficult more complicated as I go on.

That depends on whether you and I wholeheartedly embrace the Gospel. If we see Christ as a person who saves us in our existing state, to enable us to go on in our existing state, we have gained nothing, in fact why would you be saved because it is not going to change anything. Christ comes along, forgives you and you go on your way, on the same path, unchanged. What am I saying? I am saying that forgiveness does nothing for the sinner on its own. I am saying that forgiveness does not change the individual, it just makes it possible to take the next step. A man who steps out of a court of law, acquitted of his crimes, is still unreformed.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying forgiveness is of no value. Forgiveness was planned in eternity past as God's enabling gift to man, planned in great detail, its method being the self sacrifice of His only begotten Son for our Sins, a substitutionary sacrifice, to be freely given. It has tremendous value, but a value that can only be realised by those who embrace it fully. Those who say that they have been forgiven and remain unchanged in their lives, do not want Christ's true forgiveness but instead want an easing of conscience.

Perhaps this is why so many people fail to go on with Christ, having come forward at Evangelistic campaigns. In a 1990 interview with PBS, Billy Graham himself stated his belief that only about 25% of those who come forward at one of his events actually became Christians. In recent years, studies have shown that only 6% of people who "come forward" at an evangelistic crusade are any different in their beliefs or behaviour one year later. It raises the question, "What are the people coming forward, expecting?"

They come forward, and say that they give their lives to Christ and then they fall away. 94% of them come forward, fall by the wayside and are lost. It may be because we do not preach a "full Gospel", a Gospel which shows Christ forgiveness to a sinner and the sinner's obligation to follow Christ, and this constitutes taking up the cross, death to self and life in Christ.

If we were to embrace this verse we should see a different Christianity in the world. We would not see the overblown ceremonials, the chanting, the dressing up, the exalting of some men as leaders, the weekly dances that pass for worship, this and much more would be consigned to the rubbish bin. Instead, we would see believers watching Him lead on and following the things which He did and nothing else.

71. Losing yourself *Luke 9: 23 - 27*

Luk 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luk 9:24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luk 9:25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? Luk 9:26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. Luk 9:27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God.

Last time we looked at the “followers of Jesus” which is where you get the term “Christian” from, *Act 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. **And the disciples were called Christians** first in Antioch.* The followers of Jesus, the disciples, were called Christians.

The followers of Jesus did just that, they followed, they kept behind Him and copied His actions, works, habits and principles. There was no room for self, only space for Him. They did not set up their own brand of Christianity in His name, they did not get ahead of Him, they were behind Him. So why have we got this smorgasbord of organisations all claiming some exclusivity over Christ, claiming to be the “true Church”, while not following Him. Isn't there a disparity between following Christ and setting up an organisation? Of course there is.

The various add on's, do not clarify the working of Jesus, simple Christianity, they breed confusion. People do not know where the things, the practices, the dressing up, the qualifications, the rituals, or the titles come from. It creates a mystique not a transparency, and leads to a different Christianity than Christ commanded. If you begin to strip away the tradition and forms that were invented by man, you might just get back to real Christianity. Rather than show Christianity, they disguise it.

What does this mean, *Luk 9:24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luk 9:25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?* I do not like this translation, because it is not talking about “life” as existence. I do not think that “life”, the existence of a human being, the type of living that a person makes is being spoken of. It is not the underlying word in the text.

Here we see how much richer the Greek language was, as it distinguishes between three form of life, **bios**, **zoe** and **psyche**. These words have different meanings, but they are all translated into our English versions as “life”.

*Let us look at their use, Luk 8:14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this **life**, and bring no fruit to perfection.* There, “life” is βίος = bios, it is the present state of existence, by implication the means of livelihood. It is the life of the physical body and the English word *biology* comes from *bios*.

Then there is the life eternal, *Mat 18:7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Mat 18:8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into **life** halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. Mat 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into **life** with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.* There life, Ζωή = zōē, refers to the life in God’s realm, as in, *Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the **life** was the light of men.*

Finally we have the word Jesus uses here, *Luk 9:24 For whosoever will save his **life** shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his **life** for my sake, the same shall save it.* Here the word for life is ψυχή = psuchē, breath, and refers to the psychological life of the human soul, that is, the mind, emotion, and will. The English word psychology comes from psyche. An example of a correct translation is where Mary praises God from her whole being, where we translate the word “soul” not “life”, *Luk 1:46 And Mary said, My **soul** doth magnify the Lord.* Synonyms are very important.

Mankind is in danger of not simply losing his life in physical death, not simply losing eternal life after this life, but losing his soul, his mind, emotion, and his will. In this state he would be verging on madness, deprived of the life of God, he would have nothing to console him. He would be in a hell of his own making with nobody to help him. His mind would be lost to the stability that God provides and he would descend into blackness. He would be like the man demon possessed, who dwelt among the swine. This is the prospect that you face if you do not heed these words, you will become mad, insane, lost.

The consequences of rejecting Christ are not a cessation of existence, one that people often take as an alternative to being with Christ. The consequence of rejecting Christ is that you are conscious and consciously punishing yourself. You torment yourself, like the man for whom Father Abraham could do nothing, in the story of the “Rich man and Lazarus”. As far as I can see, Scripture says that hell is a place of torment, but who causes the torment. The person who is cast there carries their torment with them, and the devils are also punished for their crimes, so they are not inflictors of punishment. Men inflict their own punishment on themselves and the worst of the punishments is regret.

Now there is urgency to the words of Jesus, not just a saying that is wise, but a command, *“For whosoever will save his **soul** shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his **soul** for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he*

gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" It is seen now, not so bad to lose your soul for the purpose of saving it, but it is up to you. What if you gained the whole world, limitless money, fame beyond measure, power over all creatures, it would be as nothing compared to the value of your human soul in the Kingdom of God. If you lost your soul you would be like a castaway on a desert island, you would be missing that company which will enrich eternity, Christ.

If you lose your soul, you descend into madness, wailing and grinding of teeth, hell of your own making, a lifetime spent on manufacturing it and an eternity spent reaping it. In Dante's vision of hell, it had written over the gates of hell, "abandon hope, all you who enter". That must be the ultimate hopelessness.

I said that regret was one of the chief torments of man and here is another of the torments, *Luk 9:26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.* It is the torment that comes upon us that we were ashamed of Christ, that we feel guilty or embarrassed to have been associated with Him.

All of this seems unreal to the person who has not come to the faith. Why does Christ not just let you go if you do not want to believe, put it down to someone who just does not want to follow Him? Why does He want to punish you if you do not bow to His will, after all is not "free will" one of God's gifts, and the choice is yours? If someone doesn't like you and doesn't want to join your organisation, you just do not have anything to do with them, you don't torment them forever.

The error in thinking is that you are equal to God, that God is the same as you, and that you are competing on equal terms in this Universe. That is not so. You are a creature, a created being, made to serve the creator, designed to live by His rules, made in His image, completely subservient to Him. The fall of man consists of a rebellion instigated by His other rebellious creation, in the world of spirits led by the devil. It is a question of which side you are on and who you will bow down to.

The quarrel is not like a human disagreement, where you will beg to differ over the rights and wrongs of the issue. It is one where there is a clear right and wrong because by definition God is right, *Rom 3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? Rom 3:4 God forbid: yea, **let God be true, but every man a liar**; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.* That is the bottom line, God says and you do.

There is no arguing with God, you were made for a purpose, and if you refuse to fulfil that purpose, God will put you on the eternal scrapheap of hell, because He has no use for you. If you are ashamed of Christ, then you know the outcome, where you are going. If you are ashamed of Christ you can be sure that He is

ashamed of you, *“of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s”*. He is a proof of life in Christ.

This event occurs at the second coming of Christ, when He comes in **His own glory**. Jesus returns triumphant, not in the Father’s glory only, but in His own. In the Messianic passage, the Lord says, *Isa 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; Isa 42:7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. Isa 42:8 I am the LORD: that is my name: and **my glory will I not give to another**, neither my praise to graven images.*

This mystery of God, shows the Father and the Son are one. If He will not give His glory to another, why does Christ claim it? *Mar 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh **in the glory of his Father** with the holy angels.* The verse in Mark’s Gospel says it slightly differently to Luke. It says, *“**in the glory of his Father**”*. Christ comes, covered in glory, covered in His father’s glory, yet which glory His Father will not give to any man. It is of course the shared glory of the Father and Son, who are coequal and coeternal.

Now Christ reveals another mystery, *Luk 9:27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God.* No, its not talking about entering the Kingdom of God, its talking about seeing the Kingdom, and some would see it before they died.

Like many people, you had thought that the Kingdom was something you entered when you died, and it was the place where your spirit went. It is much more than that, and we shall try and get to the meaning of Jesus’ words. Perhaps we are confused by the statement of Jesus to Peter, *Joh 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Joh 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.* Some people take that as a literal saying, that the disciple would live until Jesus came. If that were so the disciple would be 2000 years old.

The next verse is included as a clarification by John, *Joh 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet **Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*** What Jesus is saying is, that it is none of Peter’s business if the disciple lived or died, and don’t think you are important enough in the pecking order for me to even answer that question. Besides, Jesus is not talking about the Kingdom.

Is the Kingdom of God a place? Yes it is, but it is a place that is governed by the attitude of its subjects. *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The*

*Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the **Kingdom of God is within you**. It is a place where God reigns and so it can be said to exist within every true believer. It is a fact that, Luk 9:27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God.*

But I think there is more to Jesus statement about the Kingdom, and Mark notes in his Gospel account, *Mar 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen **the Kingdom of God come with power***. (It is strange why the verse in Mark is separated by a chapter from the rest of the verses, but as you know, men tinkered with the structure of Scripture.)

The Lord says that they will see, “**the Kingdom of God come with power**”. It is the “power” that makes the coming kingdom different. It comes within you, *Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, and it comes with **power**.

When did the Kingdom come in power? *Luk 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with **power** from on high*. The coming of the Kingdom, in the power of the Holy Spirit was realised on the Day of Pentecost.

So let me try and summarise. The Kingdom has always been present among men, *Dan 4:3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation*. It comes into sharp focus with John the Baptist, *Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, Mat 3:2 And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**. Mat 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*.

The Kingdom is an invisible Kingdom, *Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the **Kingdom of God is within you***. It exists where believers exist. It also undergoes a change when Jesus dies and ushers in the person of the Holy Spirit, *Luk 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with **power** from on high*.

Believers have the Power of Christ, given by the Holy Spirit, *Joh 14:25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*.

The question as to what manifest itself as “power” remains for us to answer. Initially, and to establish the Gospel, there were signs and wonders which may continue to a lesser degree nowadays, indeed they are not so much seen. But there was the establishment “of the faith” by the power of preaching, *1Co 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 1Co 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

If your faith rests upon seeing the miraculous, then you are indeed a wretched creature, and “seeing is believing” did not go down well with Jesus, as Thomas was appropriately rebuked, *Joh 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

If you have the power of the Gospel, the power of the Word, the enduring word, in your heart, this will propel you into the Kingdom.

72. The transfiguration *Luke 9: 28 - 31*

Luk 9:28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. Luk 9:29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. Luk 9:30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Luk 9:31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Why does the Scripture have this very graphic scene of the two great prophets of the OT together with Jesus? It could be that they symbolise the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah, both in agreement with Christ, both talking about the same thing. But this had been said already, *Mat 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Mat 11:13 **For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.** Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.* It had been said in so many words, that it did not need to be staged again, to be enacted, to make it plain.

There is a common place that links the two men, Moses and Elijah, and that is mount Horeb. The Mountain of God, Mt. Horeb, Mt. Sinai and Mt. Paran are all names for Mt. Sinai. Mt. Sinai occupies an important place in human history, as well as in the history of God's people, most significantly, it was the place where God appeared in person to Moses and gave him the law. Earlier, at the end of Moses' 40-year exile in Midian, God appeared to him in a burning bush at the base of the Mountain of God and called him to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites to freedom, *Exo 3:1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in*

law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

When the Israelites first arrived at Mt. Sinai, Moses struck a rock at Horeb to provide water for the multitude, *Exo 17:6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.* They then spent 11 months at the holy mountain before breaking camp and moving on to Kadesh Barnea.

Shortly after arriving at Mt. Sinai, or Horeb, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visited Moses and advised him on how to govern the people. Moses then ascended the mountain and received the law from God, as well as instructions for constructing the Tabernacle. This was followed by the sin of the golden calf and its aftermath. Skilled craftsmen among the Israelites constructed the Tabernacle and its furnishings under Moses' supervision. The first Passover was celebrated exactly one year after leaving Egypt. Before departing, more laws were given and a census was taken.

Mt. Sinai appeared in recorded Biblical history only one more time. Nearly six centuries after the Israelites were at Mt. Sinai, Elijah fled to 'Horeb, the mountain of God' to escape the wrath of Queen Jezebel following his encounter with the priests of Baal at Mt. Carmel. All told, some 63 chapters of the Old Testament are devoted to events that took place at Mt. Sinai, or Mt. Horeb. This amounts to 14 percent of the 436 historical narrative chapters from Genesis to Esther. After Elijah's visit, Mt. Sinai dropped out of Biblical history, and its location faded from the remembrance of God's people.

Mt. Horeb forms a link between Moses and Elijah, but also because of something that happened to them. **They both saw the Glory of God**, *Exo 33:17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. Exo 33:18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. Exo 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. Exo 33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. Exo 33:21 And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: **Exo 33:22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: Exo 33:23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.***

Similarly with Elijah, *1Ki 19:8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. 1Ki 19:9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here,*

Elijah? 1Ki 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 1Ki 19:11 **And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: 1Ki 19:12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.** 1Ki 19:13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

They had both desired to see God, but He only showed His back to them. In the OT, God had not revealed His face, but this was something that would change in the NT, Joh 14:8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Joh 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? They were no longer held from seeing His Glory.

Jesus' metamorphosis, for that is the word in the Greek in Mark's Gospel, saw Him completely change into the Glory of heaven. There were the two OT prophets, not dead but very much alive and compos mentis, in Glory with Him. Moses had already tasted this Glory at Mt. Horeb, Exo 34:29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that **Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.** Exo 34:30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

Paul comments on this event, 2Co 3:7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: 2Co 3:8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? This event in Jesus ministry shows that the new covenant is far more glorious the old.

But what made it more glorious? Luke tells us they spoke about during that meeting, to which the disciples were privy. The spoke about the "Exodus" of Jesus and this is what made it more glorious. There was one thing and one thing only, the nexus of the Universe, the subject of the ages, on the minds of these prophets, **the "Exodus" of Jesus.** Moses had experienced the temporal

excursion, the Exodus from Egypt, but this event was to pale into insignificance with the coming Exodus from Jerusalem.

“O Jerusalem”, Jesus says, lamenting the great city, *Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Luk 13:35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The greatness had gone, the memorial to her was, “*Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee*”. It was no longer the place it was.

Jesus was finished with this world, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not **be delivered to the Jews**: but now is my kingdom not from hence.* His disciples, His angels would have fought tooth and nail for His Kingdom if it were of this earth, but it was not to be. His servants would have fought to the end to stop Him being delivered to the Jews.

Note this phrase “**delivered to the Jews**”. Yes, it was the Jews who were the prime movers in Crucifying Christ, *Mar 10:33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:* It was the Jewish leaders, the chief priests, who were the architects of His demise, His own people His countrymen, *Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

The Jews were finished. The descendants of Judah, the twelve tribes of Israel, had run their course, from henceforth, *Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Gal 3:28 **There is neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* The true seed of Abraham are the heirs of the Kingdom. The new citizens of the Kingdom would shed Nationality, Race, Gender, and Status to be at one in the Messiah, to be the true sons of Abraham.

Moses and Elijah, who had already passed through death, talked to Jesus on this side of death about this glorious future. Moses died before entering the Promised Land, *Deu 34:5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. Deu 34:6 And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.* Elijah was taken up in the chariot of Fire and both had no known burial place.

Yet despite the mysteries surrounding their departures, here they both are, recognisable, in the form at which they died, or at least that's how they were apparently recognisable to the disciples, fully cognisant of events and talking of Jesus departure. What did they say about it? It was the mystery of the ages, the thing of which they all desired to know, Moses and Elijah too.

They knew that the Messiah was to come, that He was to suffer and the glory that was to follow, even the Samaritan woman knew that, *Joh 4:25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Joh 4:26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. Joh 4:25 The woman saith unto him, **I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Joh 4:26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.***

What they did not know was the time, WHEN. *1Pe 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 1Pe 1:11 Searching what, or **what manner of time** the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1Pe 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

We have always wanted to know WHEN, *Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, **wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?** Act 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. He does not answer the question.*

This event, the Metamorphosis, the Transfiguration, did not talk of the end of the age, the Day of Judgement, but when our Lord would end His work on earth and establish the age of the Holy Spirit. It spoke of His Exodus, His decease, His death and the destruction of the power of the devil, who had for too long had man cowering in fear of death, *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.***

The appearance of these two old prophets gave a strong message to that lie of satan, that to die was a fearful thing, that it was something to be afraid of. Look, here are two of the most famous men of the OT, alive, continuing their lives, talking with Jesus. What power did satan hold over them? None whatsoever.

This passage of scripture speaks about Him who has overcome, and those who can overcome, and it is a vivid reminder of the victory of Christ.

73. The transfiguration Pt. 2 *Luke 9: 32 - 36*

Luk 9:32 *But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. Luk 9:33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. Luk 9:34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. Luk 9:35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. Luk 9:36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*

When Jesus prayed the disciples fell into sleep, *Mar 14:37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Mar 14:38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.* The startled Peter, trying to grasp the situation, blurted out, *"it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: **not knowing what he said.**"*

I wonder if Peter half guessed that it was something in the OT, because it had jogged his memory, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. It just came out, *"let us make three tabernacles"*, and why he said it might become clearer later, but such is the mystery of memory.

What is a tabernacle? A look at different versions will give rise to a variety of translations, words for "tabernacle", tent, booth, shelter, Succoth. I think that Peter's thought is somehow prompted by the Feast of Tabernacles, which we read about in Leviticus chapter 23.

*Lev 23:33 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Lev 23:34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, **The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days** unto the LORD. Lev 23:35 On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Lev 23:36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. Lev 23:37 These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: Lev 23:38 Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and*

beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD. Lev 23:39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. Lev 23:40 **And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.** Lev 23:41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Lev 23:42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: Lev 23:43 That your generations may know that **I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt:** I am the LORD your God. Lev 23:44 And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.

Tabernacles or Booths, Succoth, is one of the three compulsory festivals of ancient Israel, Exo 23:14 *Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.* Exo 23:15 *Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)* Exo 23:16 *And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.*

It was a time of celebration when attendance at the festival was mandatory, in the place God shall choose. Deu 16:16 *Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:* Deu 16:17 *Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.*

The feasts coincided with the agricultural year, and the phrase, “*they shall not appear before the LORD empty*” suggest it is a sort of harvest festival. The festivals also served to remind the people of the Exodus, “*for in it thou camest out from Egypt*”. The feast of Tabernacles particularly reminded them of the Exodus, Exo 12:37 *And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to **Succoth**, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.* Succoth was in Egypt, and it was a place of rest before the children of Israel crossed the red sea.

It was at Succoth, or “Booths” that Israel first observed the feast, Lev 23:42 *Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:* Lev 23:43 *That your generations may know that **I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt:** I am the LORD your God.* The Feast of Tabernacles takes place on the 15th of the

Hebrew month Tishri. This was the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar and usually occurs in late September to mid-October. The feast commences five days **after** the Day of Atonement and at the time the fall harvest had just been completed.

The Feast of Tabernacles begins and ends with a Sabbath day of rest. During the eight days of the feast, the Israelites would dwell in booths or tabernacles that were made from the branches of trees, *Lev 23:40* ***And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.***

During the days of the feast, all native Israelites were “to dwell in booths” to remind them that God delivered them out of the “land of Egypt” and to look forward to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would deliver His people from the bondage of sin. The Feast of Tabernacles, like all the feasts, was instituted by God as a way of reminding Israelites in every generation of their deliverance by God from Egypt.

If Peter, in his dazed state, had thought this event at the Transfiguration had resembled the feast of booths, he did not say so directly. He implied it though, and being linked with the “Exodus” theme it sets a new insight into Christ’s ministry for the disciples. They would begin to see themselves as the new Israelites, the poor and oppressed people. They would have to consider who was oppressing them, as it was no longer the Egyptians or Pharaoh. What was it that God would go to all this trouble to reveal His Messiah for, to set Him up for us as the Saviour of His people, as Moses was to the Israelites?

It was to deliver them from sins, *Mat 1:21* *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.* Pharaoh and Egypt were a type of the devil and the world of sins, from which Moses delivered the people, but all men were labouring and are labouring under a curse.

We often ask the question “Why does god allow evil and suffering in the world?” The short answer is that it is a fallen world. We often forget that the world we live in was condemned from the beginning when the Lord cursed it, *Gen 3:17* *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Gen 3:18* *Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; Gen 3:19* *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* **We ALL live under God’s curse in this life.** We all need delivering.

Peter vaguely saw that deliverance, in fact he had gone on and seen the people delivered out of bondage, not yet having crossed the Red sea, but having escaped to Succoth. In his mind he was going out of the captivity, as the Lord had said, *Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, **to preach deliverance to the captives**, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

It was slowly coming together in Peter's mind, and what a better thing to do than to celebrate, to build Tabernacles in this place, in remembrance of the great deliverance. Temporary shelters, tents, like Abraham who dwelt in tents, not because it was cultural to dwell in tents but religious, *Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, **dwelling in tabernacles** with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 **For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.***

Peter did not get much time to think this through as suddenly he was overcome by a cloud, as were the other disciples, *Luk 9:34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. Luk 9:35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. Luk 9:36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*

It must have seemed surreal to the disciples, startled out of sleep, trying to grasp what was happening, seeing two old testament prophets talking with Jesus, their minds in a whirl, fear, then the cloud embraces them and they hear a voice, "*This is my beloved Son: hear him.*" God hands over to the Voice of Christ, you will listen to Him, He says.

"It has been more than 130 years since the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche declared: "God is Dead" (or *Gott ist tot*, in German), giving philosophy students a collective headache that's lasted from the 19th century until today. It is, perhaps, one of the best known statements in all of philosophy, well known even to those who have never picked up a copy of "The Gay Science", the book from which it originates. But do we know exactly what he meant — or, perhaps more importantly, what it means for us?

Nietzsche was an atheist for his adult life and so he didn't mean that there was a God who had actually died, but rather that our idea of one had. After the Enlightenment, the idea of a universe that was governed by physical laws and not by divine providence had become

mainstream. Philosophy had shown that governments no longer needed to be organized around the idea of divine right to be legitimate, but rather by the consent or rationality of the governed — that large and consistent moral theories could exist without reference to God. This was a tremendous event. Europe no longer needed God as the source for all morality, value, or order in the universe; philosophy and science were capable of doing that for us. This increasing secularization of thought in the West led the philosopher to realize that not only was God dead but also that human beings had killed him with their scientific revolution, their desire to better understand the world.

The death of God didn't strike Nietzsche as an entirely good thing. Without a God, the basic belief system of Western Europe was in jeopardy, as he put it in *Twilight of the Idols*: "When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident... Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. **By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole.**"

He was absolutely correct. That, "by breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole". By breaking one command we break all, *Jas 2:10 If you obey every law except one, you are still guilty of breaking them all.* CEV.

The so called Christian church has been responsible, perhaps more than any other organisation, for contributing to "the death of God, by its disobedience to the Voice of Christ. Every time we disobey God, in word or practice, we contribute by pushing another knife in His back. If God is dead, we have killed Him, by not listening to His voice. We know better than He does what is good for men, we steer them down the broad path, herding them to their destruction, all because we have rejected hearing Him.

No amount of singing hymns, big oratory or grand ceremony can make up for this lack of hearing. One of the great kings of the OT found this out to his destruction, *1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1Sa 15:23 **For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.***

He chose to listen to a witch and unto a witch he shall go. King Saul was reduced to seeking the witch of Endor, since God had ceased to answer him. That event at Endor, occurred not a stones throw from where this metamorphosis, the

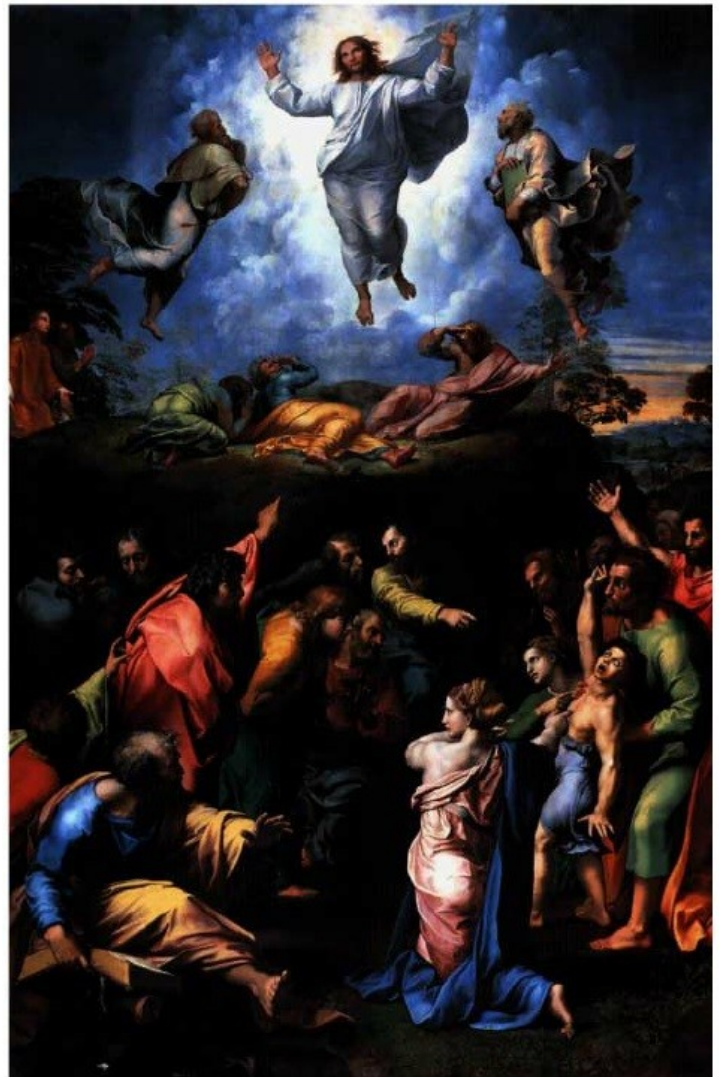
Transfiguration, occurred on Mt. Tabor. It is a salutary lesson to us as to whom we will listen to.

As the scene goes back to normalcy, no trace of what has just happened remains. A silence of contemplation of the things that had just happened descends upon them, *Luk 9:36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*

74. Faith in what or who *Luke 9: 37 - 42*

Luk 9:37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. Luk 9:38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. Luk 9:39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. Luk 9:40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. Luk 9:41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. Luk 9:42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

There is a famous painting by Raphael, which I have mentioned before, that depicts this scene. The Transfiguration is the last painting by the Italian High Renaissance master Raphael. From the late 16th century until the early 20th century, various commentators regarded it as the most famous oil painting in the world.



Cardinal Giulio de Medici, who later became Pope Clement VII, commissioned the work, conceived as an altarpiece for Narbonne Cathedral in France; Raphael worked on it in the years preceding his death in 1520. The painting exemplifies Raphael's development as an artist and the culmination of his career. Unusually for a depiction of the Transfiguration of Jesus in Christian art, the subject is combined with the next episode from the Gospels (the healing of a possessed boy) in the lower part of the painting.

Raphael plays on a tradition equating epilepsy with the aquatic moon (luna, from whence lunatic). This causal link is played on by the watery reflection of the moon in the lower left corner of the painting; the boy is literally moonstruck. In Raphael's time, epilepsy was often equated with the moon (*morbis lunaticus*), possession by demons (*morbis daemonicus*), and also, paradoxically, the sacred (*morbis sacer*). In the 16th century, it was not uncommon for sufferers of epilepsy to be burned at the stake, such was the fear evoked by the condition. The link between the phase of the moon and epilepsy would only be broken scientifically in 1854 by Jacques-Joseph Moreau de Tours.

The three disciples come from the mountain top to the earth below, from a vision of heaven to a vision of hell. The painting unifies two events, the Transfiguration and the healing of the boy, again showing us that Luke is not an account of isolated events, but that one event bleeds into the next. While three disciples and Jesus go up the mountain, the other disciples remain at the bottom and become engaged in an exorcism, and according to the young man's father, all to no avail, *Luk 9:40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not*. In short, the disciples fail to deliver and this has caused quite a stir among the people, *Luk 9:37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him*. Why could they not work the miracle?

I mentioned faith in **quantitative terms** when I discussed the Centurion and how the Lord had not found such faith in Israel (**50. The Gentile with more faith than Israel**). I said that,

I have often thought how nice it would be to remove that gigantic tree that blots my sunlight in the garden at about 3.00 pm, and I have thought of our Lord's words frequently in respect of this tree. I had often thought also that there is no one who has any faith, because if it were true, things would be uprooted everywhere and thrown in the sea, as they tested their faith. I have also considered this test of faith, "*be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea*" as a rather trite example of faith and that a more worthy example could be found. I suppose the Centurion is one such example.

Perhaps though, our Lord is talking about how much faith you need to do something. If you want to shift a tree, then a small amount of faith is needed, a mustard seed being analogous to the amount required. You need a much smaller amount to do less impressive things, much smaller than a mustard seed, much smaller than a grain of salt. Its all down to what you are trying to do with faith.

Faith is the language of the universe. If you can speak “faith”, then the universe hears, understands, and does as it is told to do, *“If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you”*. You may make the slightest whisper in “faith”, silent as falls the mustard seed, and at once the ears of the universe prick up, and faithful to the word, like a beloved dog, the universe obeys his master’s voice.

This faith is **quantitative**, that is a measurable amount of faith but it does not say what faith is. Is the Lord talking about a similar “faith” as this? We get ourselves confused when we talk about faith. We see it as something concrete, something we can own, our “faith” and we use it on behalf of other people, we invoke our “faith” and it will work miracles, or so we think. Is this faith?

This is an extract from Robert Charles Sproul sermon on this subject, “Faith Out of Context”,

Listen to what Jesus says in Mark 9 verse 23: “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” That verse, ripped out of its context, has been used over and over again not to describe a powerful Christian faith, but really to be used as a talisman for magic in an age that has been so influenced by a neo-Gnostic spirit.

The new age movement seeks to manipulate the external world by mind control. If you can think about world peace, you can bring world peace. In the Christian world, we have simplistic ministries that reference faith healing and say to people, “All you have to do is believe, and if you believe strongly enough, you can move mountains and you can make anything happen you want to make happen.”

I’ve told the story once before of a young man, a student of mine, who suffered from cerebral palsy. He was a dynamic, victorious, devout Christian, and some of his students at the college came to him and said, “Harvey, we’re going to heal you from your cerebral palsy.” So, they laid hands upon Harvey, and they pronounced him whole, but Harvey still had cerebral palsy. The students said: “Well the problem with you, Harvey, is that you don’t have enough faith, and if you don’t

have enough faith, you're never going to get healed. But if you really want to be healed, you have to claim your healing in Jesus' name. You have to believe that you're healed before you can be healed." its like trying to give a blind man his sight, and telling him, "Name it and claim it; believe that you can see, and then you'll be able to see."

This goes on every day in America. People are told to believe that they can see, and they say, "I believe, I believe," and then open their eyes and can't see a thing. Suddenly, the weakness is in them. They have no faith. Nobody asked the obvious question: If all it takes is enough faith, why doesn't the healer have enough faith for the person to bring them to this conclusion? Well, that wasn't enough for poor Harvey. It was Harvey's fault that he wasn't healed because he didn't have enough faith. So, then they said, "We're going to meet with you again, and this time we're going to have an exorcism, because your problem is that you're demon-possessed." Then they tried to drive the demon out of poor Harvey, and Harvey still had cerebral palsy.

He came to me in all earnestness and tears, and he said, "Dr. Sproul, do you think that I'm demon-possessed?" I said, "No, Harvey, I don't think that you're demon-possessed, but I wonder about your friends." I prayed for him, and I prayed that he would have peace, that he would trust the Lord with his body and his life, because sometimes God says, "No." This text is not a blanket, universal promise that says, "Anything that you believe will happen, will happen."

But true as that is, it does not answer the question, why did the disciples of Jesus lack faith? Why could they not work a miracle?

The simple answer was that He, Jesus, was up the mountain and they were below and He was not with them. **The lack of faith is the lack of Jesus, Joh 15:4** *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: **for without me ye can do nothing.***

This is faith which we might call **objective faith** as opposed to **quantitative faith**. For example, *Heb 11:6 But without **faith** it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must **believe** that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The object of faith is God and we must believe in Him. Faith and belief come from the same word, πίστις = pistis = faith, and πιστεύω = pisteuō = to believe. One is the noun the other is the verb of the same root. To believe is to exercise faith, and that must have the person of Jesus as the object before our eyes, "**for without me ye can do nothing**".

Now this matter had been one that involved the scribes and they had got their teeth into the matter, *Mar 9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. Mar 9:15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. Mar 9:16 And **he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?***

The issue was why the disciples could not heal the man's son. It was not just the disciples that lacked faith, the boy's father lacked faith, indeed they all lacked faith. Not one of them had enough faith to work the miracle, *Luk 9:41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. The boy's father had some faith but it needed more, Mar 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mar 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; **help thou mine unbelief.***

All of the people then present lacked faith, lacked a belief in Jesus, and as a result of that deficiency they could do nothing. Harvey's friends, although invoking the word "faith", had no faith, and like the disciples they could do nothing, and poor Harvey was still suffering. They did not have "belief" enough to work the miracle. People who pray in Jesus Name, for healing, and it doesn't happen, and then have the effrontery to blame the person that they are supposed to be helping for a lack of faith, are charlatans. They are just going through the motions but have no faith in Jesus.

The father is perhaps the one who tells us more about what is going on here. He knows that he has some faith but lacks enough faith for the miracle of healing and so he asks Jesus, *Mar 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* He asks Jesus for the faith to believe, not in the miracle **but in the miracle worker**, Jesus.

After all it is Jesus who works the miracles, we are just partakers in His works. When the disciples go out it is to Jesus command to heal the sick, not in their own power, *Luk 9:1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases..... Luk 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: Luk 10:9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

Left to themselves, as here at the base of the mount of Transfiguration, they are as helpless to perform miracles as they are to do any supernatural task. And perhaps this is the lesson, that because they had seen Jesus perform miracles, they thought that they could do it in their own strength. **It is the first miracle attempted by the disciples and it is an absolute failure.**

It shows us that copying Jesus might be a high form of a complement to Him, but it does nothing practical without His permission. And it is here that we address the fundamental error of “doing things for Jesus”. Have we got His express permission to do the work, have we even consulted Him about it, have we got an answer or are we just acting it out supposing that it is right and doing it in our own “faith”, like Harvey’s friends.

They were an unbelieving generation, they all lacked faith, *Mat 17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.*

Then the disciples ask Him privately why they could not perform the exorcism, *Mat 17:19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? Mat 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Mat 17:21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

75. Why we cannot heal? *Luke 9: 42*

Luk 9:42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father..... Mat 17:19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? Mat 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place;

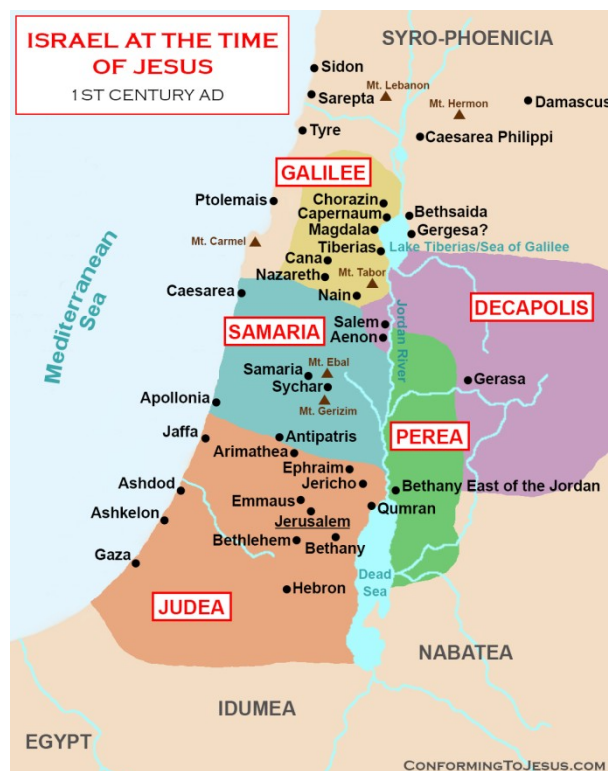
*and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Mat 17:21
Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

Jesus gives a number of reasons for the disciples not being able to work the exorcism.

1. There was the disciples unbelief and
2. There was the need for prayer and fasting.

Let us step back a minute and look at the bigger picture, rather than focusing on the verses. Let us try and see what point we are at in Jesus ministry. Let us look at the events and the timeline in His ministry. This is between the time when the 12 disciples have gone out from Galilee and returned, and the 70 disciples go out into all the places “He was to come”. It is only recorded in Luke’s Gospel and there may be a reason which I shall give later.

When the 12 went out they were not to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans, *Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*



Now when He sends the 70 out He is heading for Jerusalem. Samaria is no longer off limits, *Luk 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

Why 70? I think that they are representative of all of Noah’s descendants, Count the number in Genesis chapter 10. The previous 12 went to the Jews, the 70 go to the nations. It is in this hiatus between the sending of the 12 and the sending of the 70, that the Transfiguration occurs and this event occurs where the disciples cannot cast out the demon.

This is from Kenneth Yates of the Grace Evangelical Society,

I have always found to be a strange and hard to understand verse, *Mar 9:29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.* A man has brought his son who has a demon that caused the young boy to be deaf and dumb and tried to destroy him. Jesus cast the demon out. The disciples had tried to cast the demon out before Jesus came upon the scene and were not able to do so. Before casting out the demon, Jesus rebukes the disciples *Mar 9:19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

The disciples ask the Lord why they were not able to cast out the demon. Jesus tells them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." It must be pointed out that most translations (the critical text) do not include the word "fasting." The Majority Text does include it. I believe it belongs in the text.

I had always thought and heard that what Jesus was saying was that this particular demon was especially difficult to cast out. Most demons could be cast out without prayer and fasting, but this one was in a different category. In other words, casting out a demon was dependent upon how strong (?) the demon was.

The reasons why this is a strange verse for me, are many. It is hard to relate to since I have never cast out a demon of any kind. I don't believe the Church is called to do so. Nowhere in the Bible are we told how to cast out a demon. Casting out demons is never mentioned in any of the Epistles. In addition, we are never told which demons are particularly strong or difficult to cast out. We are never told which demons require fasting and prayer to cast out. Even in the Bible when demons are cast out, there is never a call for fasting and prayer prior to doing so.

Perhaps more strange is this passage itself. The disciples could not cast out this demon, and Jesus rebukes them. But how could they have known to fast before the father brought this boy? They had no idea that they would be called upon to cast out the demon, so how could they have done the necessary prerequisites in order to do it? How long did they have to fast, even if they had known the boy was coming?

We are told that the disciples had cast out many demons, *Mar 6:12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. Mar 6:13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.* But they couldn't cast this one out. Is it simply that this was a different kind of demon? If that is the case, I must simply confess that we are dealing with a situation that I don't

understand. Perhaps the Lord spoke to the disciples about different kinds of demons and told them how to recognize the differences, and such instructions are not found in the Bible. I would also have to confess that I simply don't know how the disciples could have known to fast and pray before this man brought his son to them.

Recently I wondered if there was another way to understand this strange (to me!) verse. Here is my feeble attempt to offer another way of seeing it. In Mark 6 the disciples were sent to the nation of Israel to proclaim the offer of the Kingdom. They could cast out demons to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah. When casting out demons they were simply doing what Jesus had commanded them to do, *Mar 6:7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits.* But in Mark 9 the disciples find themselves in a different situation.

The nation has rejected the offer and Jesus is going to be rejected by the nation and killed, *Mar 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.* Their ministry will change dramatically. The Lord began to instruct them about the need to follow Him in His suffering (8:34-38). This ministry will involve relying upon Him.

Could it be that the phrase "prayer and fasting" is an idiom expressing dependence upon God? These practices were examples of Jewish piety and such dependence. The disciples, when they tried to cast out the demon, were operating on the model of Mark 6, when the twelve were sent out. But things have changed. What before was done simply as a fulfilment of a command could now only be done in dependence upon the One they were following. "This kind" of ministry required a constant attitude of humility and a reliance upon Him. The disciples thought they were going to Jerusalem to reign. In Mark 8-10, Jesus is showing and teaching them that this is not the case.

There is another related reason and it is the reliance on self and not the reliance on the Lord. Take for example Moses, full of self-importance, coming from the presence of God, must have thought that all was well in his garden. He must be in the Lord's good books, but, *Exo 4:24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.* Why, he had done no wrong, but he had, and he had forgotten to circumcise his son, and were it not for his good wife speaking out, God would overthrow him, *Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. Exo 4:26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.* If it were not for

her, the whole of the Exodus would lay in confusion and it would be a different story.

We think that when we have obeyed one thing, it is as if we had obeyed all, and one good thing cancels, makes void, all the other wrong things that we do. If I wake up and have a good thought for someone, and do a good deed, I do not automatically atone for all the evil thoughts and unkind deeds that I did that morning. But that is the way we think. We look to Christ for the forgiveness of sin and think that is it, but we should heed John's words, *1Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1Jn 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.***

There is sin in us, there was sin in us and there will be sin in us, and the only way of dealing with it is to walk in the sunshine of Jesus.

Let Spurgeon contribute to this also, (<http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/2454.htm>),

Brethren, why do you think that the Lord allows his servants to be beaten at all? Well, of course, the chief reason in this case was—and of that we will speak presently,—because God gives the victory to faith, and if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we fall, as those disciples probably had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value, and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures.

We shall be like Samson, who went out and shook himself as he had done aforetime; but the Spirit of God had departed from him; and the Philistines soon overcame him,—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter. If we are to do the Lord's work, and to do it successfully, we must have faith in him, we must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit, and by faith we must hang upon the living God from day to day.

.....The Lord will not have us always moving in ruts, so he does what men do sometimes in our roads when they put great blocks of timber to turn travellers off from one side of the road to the other. In

that way, this lunatic child was put right in the disciples' road, so that they should not go on sleepily doing the same work without heart and without thought. This strange case wakes them up; they have something to deal with now that is very different from that they have had before, it is not a common fever, or even an ordinary case of Satanic possession, but it is a dreadful demoniac who is now before them, foaming, and raging, and wallowing in their presence, and altogether beyond their power to heal. This wakes them up; and the Lord permits us sometimes to have trouble in the church, or a shock in the family, that we may wake right up, and not go on mechanically with no spiritual life in us.

While Jesus was in the mountain, the disciples thought they could continue as before, without Him being present and they were shown wanting. They did not even know that they had to fast and pray, and not knowing is no excuse. They should have asked about casting out demons, discussed it with Him, found the different conditions of possession, made sure that they were doing things correctly. But they had got too confident and left Jesus out of the loop, and their faith was lacking. Instead of trusting to Jesus, having faith in Him, they went back to faith in themselves which proved disastrous. The fault was not with the demon possessed boy but with the disciples.

*Mat 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of **your unbelief**: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and **nothing shall be impossible unto you**. It was more important now than ever that they held Him close, Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: **for without me ye can do nothing**.*

In all of this activity, the disciples do not stop their work, stop to build churches of bricks. They were building churches of people and the lessons of building them up are critical, *1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

We must learn the lessons from our mistakes or we will not build anything that resembles a church.

76. Delivered into the hands of men *Luke 9: 43 - 45*

Luk 9:43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Luk 9:44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. Luk 9:45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

We shall look at the relationship between Jesus and His disciples in more detail, and try to discover what it consisted of, what they spoke about together, and what their attitudes were. I have always seen the disciples and Jesus in set pieces, tableau's, such as the Sermon on the Mount, or the Last Supper, all sitting around Him, listening as He spoke. You could encapsulate it in a still picture, like all those illustrations of the Gospel scenes that we are so familiar with. Beautiful as they are, yet they are so rigid and artificial, like actors adopting postures, holding the pose while the painter immortalises them on canvas. They convey a sense of what it may have been like to have been there, but what they were saying and thinking is not included.

What really concerns us is not what the scene looked like but what was going on in the minds of the disciples. This is always of interest because we are good at hiding what we really think by hiding our emotions and feelings. Jesus possessed the ability to read the whole man, we say read the persons mind, but the truth is, Jesus knew everything about the person He was facing, *Mar 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? Mar 2:8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?*

Imagine the clamour of "thoughts" that would be present to Jesus when He walked the streets of this world, rising to a crescendo when a great crowd surrounded Him, descending to a murmur of a single soul when He was alone with a person, a silent chorus of words that they dare not utter. The evil thoughts towards Him would have stuck fast as arrows and the kindlier ones as soothing ointment upon Him. Yet He could hear the lonely soul in all the confusion of voices, *Luk 8:45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? Luk 8:46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. Luk 8:47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.*

We go through this world without knowing what the people really think of us. But if we were to hear but a fraction of the name calling, the jealousy, the anger, the hatred and the sniggering that goes on behind our backs we should be shocked

and mortified that such unkind, and possibly undeserved words could be thought about us. Yet every day, we in some form or another, exhibit this kind of behaviour to our “neighbour”. Our thoughts are not always gracious and kind to others, and we look down on people who are the unfortunates of this earth with malice in our hearts. We may think evil towards them because of the way they dress, speak, their ethnicity, their body shape, their background, their past, and when we get together with others, and start gossiping about others, we multiply the defamation. What derogatory things are said about you behind your back?

We do not like it but we do it to others, we dish it out without thinking. I am willing to bet you will have a bad thought about someone today, and I am speaking of you Christians. Well said the scripture, *Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Gen 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*

D L Moody once made it uncomfortable for some listeners at a prayer meeting, when he said to them, “What would you do if the people next to you could hear your thoughts about them?” What do we do knowing that our Lord see us and knows us intimately, *Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but **all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.***

The disciples did not know about this scripture or they had forgotten the scripture. But Jesus knew all the time, what they were thinking. When they woke up, when they went out, when they came in from the day, when they slept and dreamed, all of the time their lives were recorded in infinite detail. It was as if Jesus had a movie of all that they ever did, complete with the voices of their minds, and they were all constantly replayed before Him, so that nothing they did was kept from Him, and “**all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.**” Or as the psalmist said, *Psa 90:8 and you know all of our sins, even those we do in secret. CEV.*

That is quite an overwhelming thought, that there is a total knowledge of everything I do before God, being recorded, every microsecond of my life. But you knew this of course, even if you did not realise it, for how else would God present your crimes at the Day of Judgement?

If the disciples had thought about this, they would not have been afraid to ask the question that was puzzling them, why “**the Son of man must be delivered into men’s hands**”. They would have understood that Jesus had heard their question, even if they did not utter it, but they were afraid, and that shows that they had a limited view of Jesus omniscience, and had not fully come to terms with it.

What is even stranger, is that Jesus, who knew what they were questioning in their hearts, what He had said, never the less did not help them out, by explaining what the words mean, **“the Son of man must be delivered into men’s hands”**. So why is it even recorded? It is recorded for our benefit, that we might think about it, about Jesus power, about our lack of understanding, and why it is so.

It says a lot about discipleship in general. We often make “God” up as we go along, thinking about Him in certain ways, not with any Biblical knowledge of Him, but “feelings” about how we would like God to be. That is why we settle into a church, not because we know it is the right church to go to, but because it “feels” right. Our Christian faith is based more on what we feel in us, subjective Christianity, than what God has told us, objective Christianity. This has dire, eternally fatal consequences for the disciple and for what he builds.

You may have heard of the Westcott and Hort text of the NT. This is a so called critical revision of the NT text by Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892), was used in the 1881 Revised Version of the Bible. It is also the basis of the JW’s NT, the New World Translation. These two men have an interesting history which you can read for yourself, both men being contemporaries of Darwin and the higher critical movement that was beginning to poison the churches, and against which men like Spurgeon fought in the Downgrade Controversy.

But let F J Hort speak for himself, because it gives a glimpse into where he was heading. He said,

"I had no idea until the last few weeks of the importance of texts having read so little Greek Testament and dragged on with the villainous Textus Receptus. Think of that vile Textus Receptus leaning entirely on late manuscripts."

Thus at only twenty-three years of age and having admitted to reading little of the Greek Testament, Hort concluded that the Textus Receptus was "vile" and "villainous." The more a person researches Mr. Hort, the more that an image emerges of him as a misfit with an axe to grind. Never mind that this master Greek text had withstood the test of time and the scrutiny of a vast array of biblical language scholars far superior to him for the previous two and a half centuries; never mind that it was in near perfect agreement with over 99% of all known Greek manuscripts. This 23 year old student knew that it was vile and spent the rest of his life trying to prove it. He is said to have died an early death from "mental exhaustion". *"There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked."*

It shows how prejudice at such an early age can colour a man's thinking, and the consequences of that thinking, without evidence, leads to other errors. The thought that the text could contain errors lead to the belief that it could not be the yardstick of faith and that opened the door for all manner of experiential things, which gave some credence to Darwin, and to the Anglo-Catholic movement together with a host of non-biblical beliefs such as Sacerdotalism, the priesthood, and Mariolatry. Eventually, Hort with Westcott would produce his revision of the text.

It shows how readily we adopt a position which we hold to for life, and the disciple is no exception to this. Fenton Hort had been brought up in the strictest principles of the evangelical movement, but at Rugby, under the influence of the liberal Thomas Arnold and Archibald Campbell Tait, and through his acquaintance with F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, he finally moved towards liberalism. All children will be greatly influenced by their peers and the Christian parent should not underestimate their role or how the child's peers will influence them.

I think that Jesus disciples were very young, and for this reason, they were malleable, as I have said earlier, and as such they had not taken in too much from their peers, yet still they had much to learn. As young Christians they did not know much about Jesus and I think in particular that they did not know much about "God with us" and His omniscience. They had seen the Miracle worker, the healer, the man but the still had not recognised Him for what He was, and He is not going to implant the knowledge of Himself without the experience being earned.

We are privy to the reactions of the disciples at every step of their journey but there is a question that I have. Why don't the disciples ask questions? So far in Luke's Gospel they have asked him, "what does the parable of the sower mean?" Why don't the disciples ask many questions of Jesus?

How do the disciples learn the lesson of discipleship without asking questions? The simple answer is that they observed what He did and listened to what He said. They did not get it out of a book, Discipleship for Dummies, they did not get it from men, however well meaning, they certainly did not get it from a church or a synagogue, they didn't get it from their own speculation, and it certainly was not given to them directly from God without any effort on their behalf.

There is only one way I see discipleship coming about and that is by being with Jesus, or looking to Him, *Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Heb 12:2* **Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our**

faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

If you found Christ in this world, where did you find Him? Its like those brothels in Amsterdam, with their windows displaying the goods, row upon row of choices, all saying “come in here and I will satisfy your needs”. How do you know that you found the Christ, the Christ that the disciples had found, the real Jesus, not some mock up made by man? There is only one way, by comparing Jesus Christ by what it says the Messiah would be in the Scripture.

That is why attacks on the veracity of Scripture are attacks upon Jesus. Any doubt shed upon God’s word is an attack upon Him, and upon Jesus. So the Jesus’ that men set up, of their own making, without reference to Scripture, is a false Christ, an anti-Christ. *1Jn 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 1Jn 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

The disciples were correct in just following Jesus around, not saying much but observing all. It is my opinion that they were in awe of Him, that they did not know how to converse with Him, and followed Him around like little lambs. They were the perfect illustration of the sheep with the Shepherd, *Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. Joh 10:29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

What did they talk about? I think as young men they talked among themselves about anything and everything but with Jesus they would not have talked much. My reason for saying this is that Jesus was not like them. He did not gossip, He did not engage in tittle tattle, He did not run people down behind their backs, He did not talk about current events or news except when it was relevant to His ministry. Jesus did not indulge in idle conversations, speculation, the market and stock prices. Jesus did not do sport, was not a supporter of gladiators, did not indulge in gambling, did not constantly plan holidays or breaks from His ministry. Jesus had nowhere to call home, *Luk 9:58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* Jesus did not make wisecracks, jokes, laugh, or engage in any of that trivial behaviour which we humans are prone to.

In the light of the seriousness with which Jesus held His ministry, the focus upon fulfilling His task, His aim always to please the Father, He must have seemed an austere figure, a pragmatic figure, and He expected obedience as a duty not an

option, *Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Luk 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, **say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.***

And yet He shared their hardship, lived the life that the disciples lived, ate their food, lived as one with them, but all the while He was progressing to the one goal, *Luk 9:45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they **feared to ask him** of that saying.*

I think we can see why the disciples did not ask Him of that saying, why they feared Him, kind and meek though He was. They held Him in awe. They were still learning about Him, changing into the likeness of Christ, and that is why they are so different after the Spirit comes, and people recognised it, *Act 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. **And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.***

The term Christian is used casually of every person who follows the religion of Christ. But I don't agree with this definition because we become Christians only when it is clear that Christ is formed in us, not before.

77. Who is the greatest Luke 9: 44 - 48

Luk 9:44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. Luk 9:45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying. Luk 9:46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. Luk 9:47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, Luk 9:48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

The story continues almost without a pause from the saying "that was hid from them" to the concern for them "who should be the greatest". These are 'thought questions'. I have chosen to make up a word, '**thought question**', to describe a question in the minds of or the hearts of the disciples which is not vocal, not uttered. Strangely, Jesus chooses to answer this 'thought question' of the

disciples but He deigned not to answer the previous ‘thought question’ about His death.

Jesus death apparently counts for no explanation by Him, while the position of the disciples as to who should be the greatest does. Position in the Kingdom seems more important than the crucifixion, because it gets an answer. But I think that Jesus does not want to give them any more clarity at that moment on His coming death and rather concentrates on what it means to be the great disciple.

The link between the verses is I think this, that Jesus said He was to be “delivered” or as Matthew puts it, *Mat 17:22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: Mat 17:23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.* Jesus would be betrayed, killed and resurrected three days later.

In Mark’s account, *Mar 9:31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. Mar 9:32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him,* it says that He was to be delivered into the hands of men, killed and raised again on the third day.

It is quite clear the disciples knew of the events surrounding the coming death of Jesus even if they did not fully understand them. So Jesus was going to be taken out of the picture and this created a void and who was to fill the gap? This I think prompted the ‘thought question’. *Luk 9:46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.*

This is the most important word in the New Testament about churches, ministries, and ministers that we have from Jesus. Let us look at it very carefully and see its implication for us.

This event occurs in Capernaum, which we learn of from Mark, *Mar 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? Mar 9:34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.* Jesus would not be with them much longer and so who would take over.

It is the subject of succession planning. Succession planning focuses on identifying and growing talent to fill leadership and business-critical positions in the future. It helps increase the availability of candidates prepared to fill critical roles when your senior leaders leave or retire. It might work in earthly companies but it does not work in God’s Kingdom. This is the lesson the disciples must learn.

Now it might have been the pattern of the OT to have a succession of leaders but it certainly was not the pattern among the NT. The priests are an example of succession, through the tribe, *Exo 40:12 And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. Exo 40:13 And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. Exo 40:14 And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: Exo 40:15 And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.*

The lovely thing about Luke's Gospel is that it is the only Gospel with a sequel. We can look at what Jesus taught and then we can follow it up, we have a sequel in the Acts of Apostles, to see how things were conducted. We can see if there was any succession, any handing over of position to someone who would succeed the person when they died, to provide continuity. I cannot find any in the NT. Paul does not have a successor, Peter does not set up a papal line, John does not set up a seminary in his name. They have a succession of faithful men to be sure, but no position in the NT becomes a succession by birthright, by inheritance, or man's choosing, *2Ti 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same **commit thou to faithful men**, who shall be able to **teach** others also.*

Succession was a succession of faith, faithful men, spiritual inheritance not earthly inheritance because the Kingdom had different rules. It was the succession of faith, by people who held the same beliefs, the same truths, born again people, heavenly people, not by someone who inherited his father's traditions without faith. Soon this can become an unbelieving ministry.

Years ago, in 1975, I knew an old deacon from a rundown Baptist church in Hartley Wintney. The man was 95 years old, and he clung to the deeds of this building, mithering about whom to give it to. We were a young fellowship then, and still held to a belief in "churches", buildings for meeting in rather than houses, and we approached him with a view to taking it over. We did not succeed and the man died a few years later leaving it to nobody. He left a building behind, not a church, because there was no body in the congregation. I am making the point that the man struggled for succession, to find keepers for the building, not keepers for souls, faithful men, and in the end all he left was a pile of bricks as a testimony to a once vibrant faith. If you will, he left a sepulchre, a grave marker of the faith.

This man was not alone, and I have come across many men over the years who want to create a legacy church in their own image. With them aging and their congregations aging, they stamp their mark upon worship, choose who will be

the weekly preacher from a stock of itinerants and they preside over worship. The sort of service where you have a hymn, prayer, offering, sermon, and that we called a “hymn sandwich” ministry. Eventually, it causes the worship and testimony to die out because it is not the Church of Christ but the church which mortal man built, and will die with them.

It may be a sincere attempt by these men, to secure the ministry, but it smacks to me of Uzzah stabilising the ark when he thought it was falling, *2Sa 6:6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 2Sa 6:7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.*

The disciples too held to this idea of legacy ministry, *Luk 9:46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.* It seems right, it seems good, that this precious ministry that they were building should not founder by reason of the removal of their leader. This was the issue which needed clarifying. It bears upon all that we have today regarding the state of the ministry.

Jesus answers it with a no nonsense teaching, and I use Mark's Gospel as it gives more detail, *Mar 9:35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. Mar 9:36 And he took **a child**, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Mar 9:37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*



It must have come as a bit of a slap in the face to the disciples. They had been training with Jesus, they had some knowledge now, they could reason with the scribes and Pharisees, well almost. They were not the men they were, they were important men, they had a certain position among Jesus followers. But what is important is, that they go to the humblest not the highest in the land and you make a better impression upon the lowliest if you drop all pretence of your intellectual prowess, stop using big words, engage with the people as equals, and explain things as to children.

What a difference from the view which has been handed down to us by the icons of orthodoxy, where the disciples have become aged men in coloured robes with golden halos, paving the way for the clerical robes of many churches. The start of the high church, the church which mystifies the faith, the church which grows aloof from the flock.

And I think we like it so, because when we accept a hierarchy, we can leave the business of religion to the professionals and we can get on with our lives, we can do our work and make money, we can enjoy the world's pleasures, we can sample its fruits and still have our "faith" managed and controlled by the leaders. But it is not the Church which Jesus had in mind.

The lesson Jesus is teaching by breaking in to their 'thought question', is fundamental as to how the Church should develop in the coming years. It is whether the Church is to be structured on the OT model of hierarchy and succession or on the model of faith, ability and service. The Church with Jesus as the head and only head, the body working under His direction, a Christocracy not a democracy, chosen men doing what the Master said. It is built on an individual calling and ability.

Let us look at the structure of the NT Church. *Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Act 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.* They did not have a massive counselling group to engage the new believers, they did not send them to someone else to nurture, they did not sign them up as members, they nurtured the new believers. A single body of believers sharing everything.

Luke's sequel continues, in Acts 6, *Act 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Act 6:2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Act 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, **look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. Act 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.***

Again the apostles stick to their task, "**we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word**", the multitude of disciples chose some servants of the church to minister bread to them, and they looked for the moral qualities of the servants, honesty, full of the Spirit and wisdom. No hierarchy made this decision, the body of believers did and it was motivated by service to others.

In Luke's continuing sequel, we see a council at Jerusalem deliberating over the matter of whether Gentile believers should be subject to all of the laws of Moses, *Act 15:4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, **they were received of the***

church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. The men whom God has chosen for building the believers are best equipped to bring the knowledge of God to the front of the argument. But they are not elite, they are not in sole charge of the people, above the people, they are acting for the people, on behalf of the Body of Christ.

Act 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: Act 15:23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: It was a joint decision of ALL the people not a council on its own.

In Galatia, when there was a dispute about Peter's dissembling, *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.* We see that Paul acts alone, without reference to anyone else, without a church council, because it doesn't need a church council. Peter's error can be seen and he can be reminded of the way of behaving and corrected. But it also shows that an apostle can, when acting alone, act in error. So we learn, *Pro 11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

But surely Jesus is indicating some hierarchy when He says to his disciples, *Luk 22:29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; Luk 22:30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* It certainly appears to be a governing body of the Church, but where is it constituted on earth, where do the apostles meet, all together to judge the Church on earth? They do not. It is a body constituted in the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is more symbolic than an actual counsel, for their judgement is occasioned by the obedience of the church to the apostles precepts. *Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* Service to others.

The disciples, the apostles, have got a message from Jesus and in time it will sink down. As the apostles, they made no succession planning as their lives drew to their inevitable conclusion. After all, Jesus was the same, still in charge, still building His church, and they had run their course, and it was time for the next generation of Christians to impact the Church.

Like the flower of the field which is today and tomorrow is cast into the fire, they are dispensable. It could be said to all disciples, *Heb 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: Heb 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall*

*wax old as doth a garment; Heb 1:12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: **but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.***

They would learn service, hardship and death, not quite the role they would have thought originally, but that lies in the future. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and they had enough to think about.

78. For Jesus against Jesus *Luke 9: 49 - 50*

Luk 9:49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. Luk 9:50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Mark adds a few words to this statement, *Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. Mar 9:40 For he that is not against us is on our part. Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

Casting out of devils was, it seems, to be the sole prerogative of the Disciples of Christ, at least that is what they were thinking. They were in danger of becoming exclusive brethren, and everyone else apart from them, was wrong and had to be avoided. Follow us or we will have nothing to do with you, was the cry of the "Taylorites" and you might see just what happened to them. It is, in the exclusive realms of religion, difficult to see how anybody can be evangelised. Like the Pharisees, the disciples were becoming exclusive, *Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

They had become exclusive disciples, and were moving quickly in the direction of Pharisees, they were only ones who counted as "bona fide" and they wanted Jesus to secure their exclusivity, "*Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us*". The Gospel was no longer free for all to practice but had become under the control of this group of disciples, and if the devil was going to be cast out, it was to be by them alone, and anybody else casting out devils was wrong. The fact that other people actually cast out devils was not at all relevant, it was now a question of "who" cast them out. They wanted sole, exclusive rights to cast out devils.

They had lost sight of the misery that Satan had brought upon mankind. It did not matter to them how much suffering people were put through by the devil's control of them. What mattered was the ability and exclusivity to cast out devils, not the relief that it would bring to fallen man, that was not relevant to the short sighted, uncaring, unthinking exclusive disciples.

They had not listened clearly to Jesus' former statement about "who is the greatest" in the Kingdom. If they could not be "great", well at least they could be exclusive. No, says Jesus, you cannot be exclusive either. You must treat the little child as you would receive me and you must freely give of your gifts, welcoming everyone who does likewise.

Unlike the world, where you work your way up the corporate ladder, the greasy pole, where you get into positions of control, where you become greater and sometimes the greatest, where you do not want someone doing the things you do, because it reduces your power, Jesus Kingdom is not like that. It is as if, when you advance in the Kingdom of Christ, you become of no significance, you become a servant helping others, the things you do are for Christ alone, all your works are of Christ's making, and you realise that without Christ you can do nothing. And do you know what, it really doesn't matter to you that men do not see you as a "great" person, do not see you as the miracle worker, as a great servant of the Church, all that matters to you is that they see Christ alone, and you are just an old crock pot of clay, given the privilege of holding this precious treasure, *2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

The mindset of a Christian should be totally different from the earthly, worldly mindset, and it takes a bit of time to realise this fact. The way the world does things is virtually the opposite way to Christ's way of doing things. The greatest shall be least, *Mat 23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. Mat 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Mat 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted..... Luk 22:24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. Luk 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. Luk 22:26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. Luk 22:27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

Why does it take such an inordinately long time to learn this truth? Yet still people today do not accept it, and they think that Peter was given the place of the "greatest", the representative of Christ on earth, in spite of Jesus saying the greatest should be the least, they still make an exception for Peter. The Rock is

Christ not Peter, and I think he would have been ashamed at what people have made him. John the Baptist says what we should all say, *Joh 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease*. It is not about selling us it is about Jesus.

What of the other miracle workers and who were they? The exclusive parochial view is that everything going on, is going on around **US**, and that we are the focus of God's attention. We do not give much of a thought for the great works going on elsewhere, in China, in India, in Africa. We do not consider the Christians working in the villages and towns of those continents, the people equally engaged in important work for the Lord. It is almost as if those other Christians do not exist and that God is looking at me only.

What about John the Baptist's disciples? True, John did no miracles but what of his disciples, they could have done them, especially after John was executed. They would have been prime candidates for the people John the disciple spoke of. Or could the people who cast out demons be other Jews, believing Jews?

What was the state of Jewry at the time? Clearly some were unbelieving, some were sceptical and others, like Elizabeth, Zacharias, Mary and lots of others were following the faith, keeping the law of Moses, believing the prophets, expecting the Messiah. They were good Jews making their way to the Kingdom and doing everything that was expected of them. They were just the sort of people God could gift to do His work, they were just the sort of reliable people to cast out devils. God did not have to ask permission of mere mortals, if He wanted to He would choose the people who would to do miracles for Him and He did not have to explain Himself, get permission or tell anyone of His Divine plan.

Like Elijah, the disciples could only think of themselves in God's universe, *1Ki 19:9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 1Ki 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away*. Elijah was reinterpreting his place in the universe, he was thinking about himself, he was thinking that all around him would fail and collapse if he were taken, the whole scheme of things relied on him.

From his position, he was indispensable, *1Ki 19:14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away*. And that shows how myopic we are because the Lord said, *1Ki 19:18 Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him*.

There are things that we just do not know about the Lord and His dealings, and we are not so important as we would like to think, and we are all expendable. We humans are of a limited shelf life but the Lord Omnipotent goes on forever and we pass away as the lily of the field, and we do not know what the Lord will do in future generations. We like to think that we are indispensable but we are not.

This leads to the arrogance of man, and many Christians fall foul of this. Put another way, it is the tyranny of experts, the elite, the cognoscenti, the Gnostics. You, simple Christian, cannot possibly know what to do or what anything means, because you are not an expert, you have no skill or training, trust in me they say, I am a doctor. Or as John put it, *"we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us"*. The man was not of their skill group, he was an outsider, he could not possibly be an expert.

The so called expert becomes boxed in. Take evolution as one subject of the experts. They go from an empirical science, which is provable, to a speculation, a hypothesis that is not provable and in doing so they have put themselves in a box. They say that all this existence has come about by chance, and that they know this because they are experts, not because it is based on one provable fact. To quote the Christian James Tour, *"We are utterly clueless on the origin of life"*. Yet in their box, the evolutionist tries to make sense of the world leaving the biggest part of the equation missing, leaving out God.

My friends, you who trust in Jesus, know more than all of these atheist experts. You have the mind of Christ, you have a solid foundation for your belief, all other ground is sinking sand. You view the universe with wonder because to you it is the Divine signature on all things. To the poor evolutionist, the random world of chance has no certainty, but they borrow from you the language of God, the language of certainty while denying the same, in their world of chance.

What does the Bible say about the expert who does not accept God in his formulations of life? *1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1Co 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 1Co 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** 1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God **the world by wisdom knew not God**, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

Jesus closes this saying with the words of comfort, *Luk 9:50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us*. We should always take courage from these glimpses of sunshine, somebody doing the works of the Lord that we have never heard about. We should never bad mouth them, seek to stifle

them but should always welcome the fact that there are indeed more workers for Him.

And it should also put me in mind of the fact that I am not alone and more than that, I am not in control. That should come as a relief to most struggling Christians who think that it is by their efforts that anything is done. It is not, it is by the Sovereign will of God who has the power over life and death.

We realise that God could happily do without us, *Psa 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Psa 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* In fact the heavens and the earth will go on when we are long gone and have run our course. This gives us another great lesson that if God has us as a part of His universe we must think about the way we act in that universe.

We should observe how we react to the situations that God puts in our path. For example, He puts a miracle worker in our path, so how do we react to this person? Do we immediately go against him, do we consider him an enemy, do we consider him a friend of Jesus? The situations which we find ourselves in life, are tests of the Christian character. Some people do not even bother to step back and think about the situations, but I think that we are to consider them, for in doing so we are learning about ourselves.

In that encounter with the man casting out demons, John would learn far more about himself than from any talk about how you should love your neighbour. This was practical and personal.